

**STATEMENT OF
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Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, I thank you for inviting me to speak today about the significant issue of Countering Ideological Support to Terrorism—or CIST. Increasingly, we are gaining a deeper understanding of how this mission is a vital component of our overall foreign policy. The very nature of the challenges that we face ensures that over time CIST's importance will only continue to grow.

This is driven by the fact that the war we are fighting today is an information war-- a global conflict of perception. When al-Qaida launched its attacks on 9/11 its primary goal was not to cripple the United States, but to create a perception of American weakness and vulnerability among key audiences. Similarly, when terrorists launch IED attacks in Iraq today, we see them expending great effort to capture the event so that it can be posted on the Internet, often within hours. The spectacle of the attack is as important to them -- sometimes more important -- than the destructive effect itself.

At their heart, these attacks against Americans are tools in a contest for power and authority within Muslim societies, and within Muslim diaspora communities. The goal of CIST is, therefore, to purposefully join and influence a political process – an ongoing, multi-sided conversation if you will – that is proceeding independently of the United States.

The recent successes of General David Petraeus and his Iraqi allies have dramatically demonstrated to us the primacy of politics in CIST. Gen. Petraeus has taught us that we must coordinate our statements and our actions in an effort to

influence an internal Iraqi debate about legitimate political authority in that country. Iraqi perceptions of American intent and capabilities are of paramount importance for the success of our efforts.

The Iraqi example underscores the idea that CIST is not primarily about creating “Brand America.” It should not be reduced solely to public diplomacy campaigns with the objective of burnishing the image of America. Those are laudable and important efforts, carried out principally by the US Department of State, and we fully support and encourage them. They are a critical element of the CIST mission, but they are not its essence.

The key to the CIST mission is influencing a primarily intra-Muslim conversation, with the goal of undermining the intellectual and perceptual underpinnings of terrorism. Much of the appeal of terrorist groups rests on a collective sense of victimization, a sense of an impending existential threat. Terrorist leaders actively foster the perception that the global Islamic community is under threat of extinction. To counter the terrorists, we must inject critical doubt among key populations about the terrorists' singular vision of hate and fear. It is important for us to realize that this sense of threat often derives from internal Muslim political processes as much as it does from perceptions of American intent.

We associate this vision of hate and fear primarily with al-Qaida. An examination of Arabic-language media, however, shows that key elements of that vision are echoed

and reinforced by the media of Iran, Syria, and other opponents of US policies. The fatalist destructive narrative that we commonly associate with al-Qaida is but one tool that our opponents use to thwart the development of democratic political systems, individual rights and, not least of all, the ordinary hopes and dreams that spell danger for dictatorships. For their vision to have any credibility, terrorist groups seek to foster a sense of doom--that “midnight” is fast approaching. In nurturing this sense of threat, al-Qaida, Iran, and others, argue that the United States and our allies are somehow placing the global Islamic community in peril.

To counter this narrative, we must chip away at the bleak picture of helplessness and vulnerability that support it. Our enemies foster a culture of blame to foment anger, hatred and a sense of victimization. Then, they offer themselves and their violence as the only solution to the challenges of today. The DoD attempts to counteract these responses by promoting a sense of individual responsibility, common human values across religious divides, empowerment, and a desire to fix current problems in a cooperative spirit rather than through a resort to violence.

For CIST to be successful, it must focus on the self-perceptions of key audiences rather than perceptions of America. Its message must outline an alternative future that is more attractive than the bleak future offered by terrorists. The positive narrative that explains these differences must contain more than just anti-terrorist rhetoric. It must include elements that will impact the future everyday lives of Muslims everywhere – fairness, justice, opportunity, liberty, health, education, and hope. To promote these objectives,

therefore, we cannot simply focus on "getting our message out," or on writing better talking points. To be sure, public diplomacy and public affairs are vital tools for CIST, but it primarily requires taking actions that make the alternative narrative real, and building partnership capacity among our Muslim allies. Thus, other key components of an effective CIST program include civil affairs, security, education reform, establishing the solid rule of law, and opening economic opportunity for all. In Iraq's al-Anbar province we are beginning to see the process of CIST done right.

CIST IN ACTION: COUNTERING AL-QAIDA IN IRAQ

As recently as a few short months ago, public commentary widely suggested that al-Qaida had established a secure stronghold in Iraq. The truth, we now know, is that al-Qaida was not as welcomed in Iraq as many experts and outside commentators claimed. Based on an assessment of their local interests, Iraqis in al-Anbar province have openly declared common cause with U.S. and Iraqi security forces against al-Qaida in Iraq (AQI). In late 2006, the Anbar Salvation Council emerged to oppose al-Qaida's excessive violence, ideological extremism, and attacks on civilians.

Success in al-Anbar inspired courageous leaders in other provinces to also mobilize. Diyala, a demographically mixed province northeast of Baghdad, became the scene of intense activity after terrorists were run out of Anbar. As the terrorist presence in Diyala grew so did local opposition to it, from both Sunni and

Shi`a Iraqis. The campaign in Diyala has expanded beyond its tribal basis to include mainstream politicians and parties and has created an opportunity for sectarian reconciliation. These developments, in turn, opened up a widening rift between al-Qaida's senior leadership and AQI.

This is not to imply that al-Qaida is defeated or to take credit for the hard work the Iraqis did for themselves. This example, however, raises questions the answers to which have important implications for our strategic approach to CIST. For example, in Iraq, are we witnessing a strategic defeat for al-Qaida's information warfare campaign? What can the Iraqis' experience tell Afghans, Pakistanis, Algerians, and others who wish to cast off the oppressive vision being hammered into their daily lives by al-Qaida's ruthless thugs?

These setbacks are instructive for what they tell us about Muslim communities and their relationship to al-Qaida. There is evidence of a deepening ideological divide between al-Qaida, with its uncompromising agenda of global jihad, and local groups with their more nationalist and community-focused objectives. We often mistakenly group these movements together and characterize al-Qaida as the leader of a monolithic movement, loyal to Osama bin Laden's vision and the primary symbol of Islamic resistance worldwide. Neither Islam nor al-Qaida is monolithic. Despite al-Qaida's depiction of itself as the vanguard of the Muslim community, there is a long history of disagreement among radical, Islamist

groups that stems from divergent local and international objectives, political and ethnic divides and differences over the means to accomplish their agendas.

Local insurgent groups and even individuals may adopt al-Qaida's rhetoric, but they often have their own ideas of how to operate and differ with al-Qaida on fundamental beliefs. This does not diminish the threat posed by these groups in their regions, but it does suggest that al-Qaida, with its religious and ideological rigidity, carries the seeds of its own destruction.

Through CIST, we seek to appeal to the self-interest of local communities, whose values and aspirations find no expression in al-Qaida's worldview. Although al-Qaida claims to speak on behalf of all Muslims, we should not be taken in by its propaganda, or inadvertently endorse its inflated sense of its own ideological appeal. The objective of our CIST approach is to force al-Qaida to live as a minor actor in our alternative, pro-future narrative.

Al-Qaida builds nothing; it only destroys. For this reason, we will eventually prevail. Nevertheless, winning will not be easy. In Afghanistan, Iraq, Lebanon, and the Palestinian Authority we are working to help build responsible, stable, pluralistic governments. This process takes time, particularly in deeply divided societies living in the shadow of states that turn a blind eye to terrorists operating within and across their borders. Building trust is hard. Carrying out acts of destruction and intimidation is much easier.

Nevertheless, the reality is that governments and citizens are fighting against al-Qaida. Local groups from Iraq to the Philippines have rejected al-Qaida's stagnant ideology. And the timing of these events contradicts claims that U.S. policy in Iraq has radicalized Muslims worldwide. Currents of opinion in Muslim regions are more complex than polling data can ever show. Even where polls suggest growing anti-Americanism, the link between attitudes and behavior is a complicated one. Muslims may not like U.S. policy, but it does not follow that they will turn to al-Qaida.

I am not declaring success against al-Qaida, but to paraphrase the famous quote from Winston Churchill, in Iraq this is "not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

WHAT IS SUPPORT TO PUBLIC DIPLOMACY?

Now I would like to take explain the role my office, Support to Public Diplomacy (SPD), plays in this process and some thoughts about forging a larger "community of interest" in strategic communication across the US government.

SPD was established in December 2006. I would like it to serve as a transmission belt between the Department of State and Defense, and between policy ideas and actions. A core element of this is, I believe, empowering entities of DoD, particularly the Combatant Commanders, to implement CIST strategies.

We envision this implementation taking place in partnership with State, as well as other US government agencies, foreign allies, and even the private sector. OSD Policy helps define objectives and coordinates themes; others execute programs. We strive to create—or recreate as some would argue—a system that supports the dissemination of a single, core message through multiple means.

Internal communication, between OSD, the Joint Staff, and the Combatant Commanders, is essential to the execution of successful external strategic communication. SPD and others in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy must provide clear guidance and policy statements. We also require clear diagnosis of problems—and successes—from operators. We require some hierarchy for quality control, but need to assess the layers we create in DoD and determine what “gates” are necessary to provide correct information in a persuasive manner.

As a “start-up” office, inside an enormous department, SPD possesses a little extra maneuver space in which to operate. While we cannot immediately change existing authorities, and we certainly don’t intend to subvert them in any way, I would like to harness SPD’s entrepreneurial mindset to forge a “communities of interest” approach among those groups, agencies and offices across the government who are interested in CIST. We recognize that our current governmental structural was not meant to resolve the problems of the global Information Age – the mismatch between authorities for public diplomacy

in State and the resources in DOD—being one obvious proof of this. The difficulty of being agile and responsive to information needs in a hierarchy is another. SPD is not the answer to resolving these challenges. We can, however, improve the situation. For instance, we can help develop a “global script,” with our partners and allies to improve our capacity to act in the Information Age. SPD’s goal, therefore, is to purposefully join and influence the primarily intra-Muslim conversation that I mentioned earlier in a way that strengthens the security and legitimacy of Muslims who are striving to make real a positive view of our collective futures. The War of Ideas will not be won by DoD, or for that matter, by the US government alone, but rather, by our Muslim partners working with us.

Congress’ role in this effort is crucial. I see today’s hearing as an opportunity to build, or enhance, a community of interest on CIST with you and other like-minded members of Congress. As we will discuss today, much of what the Departments of Defense and State seek to accomplish in CIST and strategic communication cannot be done without Congress. As we look at resources and organizational structures, Congress—and this committee in particular—is vital to America’s future success.

However, as you are well aware, Congress’ importance to strategic communication goes well beyond just authorizations and appropriations. You are all key communicators to both domestic and foreign audiences. In word and

deed, Congress' actions illustrate to our Allies and adversaries this country's dedication to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness through respect for law, a balance of power, and peaceful resolution of conflict.

SPD can serve as a catalyst for the community—to enliven the debate, mitigate difficulties, enlarge the dialogue, and break down barriers. Our goal is simply to help strengthen DoD's use of information as a way to support military operations and achieve national objectives.

This is not a new idea. As a nation and a government we have successfully pursued such strategies in the past. Let me just briefly read to you a passage that I think aptly captures the informational and communications challenges we face.

“We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of the sort of world we would like to see than we have put forward in the past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples...are tired and frightened by the experiences of the past and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities.”

These sentences were not penned by Ambassador Ryan Crocker from Baghdad, but rather were part of the famous “Long Telegram” that George Kennan, the

intellectual architect of America's successful post-war strategy of containment, wired to the State Department in 1946.

While focused on confronting the expansionism of the Soviet Union, Kennan's words still carry meaning for us today. Our goals today and the goal Kennan succinctly captured--are still the same. We must communicate through word and deed a more compelling vision of the world than the competing vision that our enemies today are attempting to seed across the globe. What is markedly different, however from Kennan's time, is the range of means we have available for use to communicate that different vision. The Internet and the proliferation of cell phones has revolutionized and individualized the information environment. In working with the Department of State, the Intelligence Community, the Department of Homeland Security, other elements of DoD, SPD intends to make full use of traditional and new media for CIST.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this issue and I look forward to your questions and to our common work together. The journey is just beginning.