

Testimony by Ambassador Henry A. Crumpton

Coordinator for Counterterrorism

House Armed Services Committee

**Improving Interagency Coordination for the Global War on Terror and
Beyond**

April 4, 2006

Chairman Hunter, Ranking Member Skelton, Distinguished Members of the Committee: thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I will summarize my formal written statement and ask that you include my full testimony in the record.

I am delighted to have an opportunity to brief you on the State Department's role in this issue of vital importance to the national security of the United States. The very title of this hearing indicates that you believe, as I do, that we must have a comprehensive government strategy, employing all the elements of U.S. national power – domestic and foreign, to win this war on terrorism.

Today, I would like to offer our perspective of the rapidly evolving terrorist enemy, the global battlefield, and our field-driven, interagency strategy to address this threat.

The Enemy

In general terms, Al Qaida and affiliated forces – the terrorist group which currently poses the greatest threat to the United States, its allies and partners — represent a multilayered threat. They operate on four levels: global, regional, national, and local. We must engage this enemy on all levels simultaneously. Moreover, the enemy exhibits many of the characteristics of an insurgency, one that aims to overthrow the existing world order and replace it with a reactionary, authoritarian, transnational entity. This enemy collects intelligence, employs denial and deception, uses subversion, wages propaganda campaigns, engages in sabotage, and, of course, embraces terror as a defining tactic. This is a generational struggle. Defeating it will require stamina, focus, interagency coordination, and a global response executed regionally, nationally, and locally.

We must attack the enemy "threat complex" in three strategic areas:

First, terrorist leadership: Due in large measure to the success of the United States and its partners, Al Qaida's core leadership is dead, incarcerated, or on the run. It no longer plays the central recruiting and command role it once did. This success means that we face a more diffuse, less capable, but in many ways more dangerous enemy than we did in October 2001. There are the dangerous remnants of the al Qaida leadership, but now also regional leaders such as Zarqawi in Iraq.

Second, we must eliminate terrorist safehaven. There are three basic types of enemy safehaven:

- *Physical safehaven* – these are failed or failing states, under-governed areas and state sponsors who provide places for terrorists to hide, train and organize. Many of these safehavens are on borderlands between national boundaries, for example in the Sulawesi Sea littoral or the Afghan-Pakistan border. Denying safehaven in these areas, therefore, requires a regional strategy.
- *Cyber-safehaven* – terrorists increasingly rely on the Internet to communicate, recruit, train, fund raise and plan attacks. Dealing with this safehaven at the same time as we advance our deeply held values of freedom of speech and the free flow of information poses difficult legal and practical challenges. Yet, we must contest the enemy in this area because of their growing presence and sophistication in using the internet.
- *Ideological safehavens* – These are belief systems, ideas and cultural norms that either encourage violent extremism or keep communities from denying support to terrorists or speaking out against terror. These small areas of ideological refuge often surface with individual leaders or single institutions, then spread within the cracks of society. The Finsbury mosque in London is one example.

Finally, and most challenging, we must address the underlying conditions that terrorists exploit. These include geo-political issues or ethnic struggles such as the Arab-Israeli conflict, which have been aggregated into a perception – even if it is false – that the Muslim world is disrespected and aggrieved. Al Qaida exploits local grievances, communal conflicts, and economic injustice. Al Qaida offers empty promises, but promises that resonate nonetheless. Poverty and tyranny does not cause terrorism, but terrorists exploit a sense of helplessness for which economic prosperity, liberal democracy, and hope all offer real, if sometimes distant, answers.

A Strategy for Defeating the Enemy

Countering this multi-layered threat requires calibrated application of all the elements of U.S. national power: diplomacy, information, intelligence and covert action, economic power, military power, and the rule of law. How we calibrate and orchestrate these tools of national power – most of which are international in focus, but some of which require domestic efforts – is the key. We must also build trusted networks that undermine, marginalize and isolate the enemy, displace terrorist networks from the societies on which they prey, and empower legitimate alternatives to extremism. We must act over an extended time-frame, to isolate the threat, defeat the isolated threat, and prevent its re-emergence. Domestically, we must build resistance to radical influences that wish to harm the American people.

Our effort is structured at multiple levels - a global campaign to counter Al Qaida and associated networks; a series of regional cooperative efforts to deny terrorist safehavens; and numerous national security and development assistance operations designed to build liberal institutions, support the rule of law and enhance our partners' capacity to resist the threat and address the conditions that terrorists exploit - all focused on unique local conditions. Key to this strategy is that we must work with or through partners at every level, whenever possible.

How, in practical terms, do we accomplish this? Internationally, our Ambassadors, as the President's personal representatives abroad, are uniquely poised to bring all the elements of U.S. national power to bear against the terrorist enemy. The interagency Country Teams they oversee develop strategies to help host nations understand the terrorist threat and strengthen host government political will and capacity to counter it. Bilaterally, some of these interagency programs have proven highly successful. Last month, the Department of State, USAID, and PACOM orchestrated a campaign of public diplomacy, assistance development, and civil-military operations in Jolo, a long time Abu Sayyaf safehaven in the center of the southern Philippines' Sulu Archipelago, to undercut the enemy presence. Moreover, this local effort demonstrated to the local population that they can have a future free from terrorism.

There are other examples of interdependent interagency teams working at local levels, such as the Provincial Reconstruction Teams operating in Afghanistan and Iraq. As part of the State Department's transformational diplomacy strategy, 100 slots, with more to follow, have been shifted to areas of CT concern; many of these slots will be for local deployment, outside the traditional capital cities, often in concert with U.S. military deployments.

But as I noted earlier, we need more than local or national bilateral programs to root out transnational safehavens. With that in mind, we have worked with our interagency partners to develop regional strategies. For example, the Trans Sahara Counter Terrorism Initiative is a multi-year strategy 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 our bilateral military ties. EUCOM, State, USAID, and others contribute to this regional effort.

We are broadening this approach through a Regional Strategic Initiative (RSI), a program designed to develop a flexible networks of interconnected Country Teams. My office is working with Ambassadors in key terrorist theaters of operation to assess the threat and devise interagency strategies and policy recommendations. These strategies are key to promoting cooperation between our

partners in the War on Terror – between Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines, for example, as they deal with terrorist transit across the Sulawesi Sea; or between Mauritania, Algeria, Morocco, Niger, Chad, and Mali to counter a GSPC enemy recruiting and hiding in the desert which sits astride their national borders.

We have had three RSI conferences this year, and more are scheduled for the coming months. These conferences are chaired by a regional group of Ambassadors, with the Washington interagency representatives in attendance. This, of course, includes representatives of the Geographic Combatant Commander, plus Special Operations Command.

Flexibility is a requirement. Our terrorist enemy is highly adaptable. Defeating him requires both central planning and field authority to amend plans in the course of implementation. We must also apply resources quickly, and with specific focus. We can achieve this agility by generating an interagency consensus, a shared “diagnosis” of the strategic situation in a given region. Using this common perspective, networked country teams can then self-synchronize efforts across multiple diverse programs that would otherwise be too complex for central coordination.

Our Chiefs of Missions’ strategy sessions have produced some recommendations on other issues which I understand are also of interest to Members of the Committee, such as deployment of State personnel to conflict

zones, and cross training with other agencies. For example, the Joint Interagency Coordination Group and Joint Interagency Task Force (West) in Iraq are effective. My office is working with the Pentagon to assess whether State Department representation on those bodies could contribute to regional integration and serve as a model for future interagency cooperation. The State Department's Office of Political-Military Affairs has assigned Political Advisors to all the Combatant Commanders and this program is growing. Within my office, there are more active duty and reserve military officers detailed to our operations directorate than State Department officers. Moreover, we are also working with the Diplomatic Security Bureau, USAID, the intelligence community, Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice, the Department of Treasury and others to integrate our efforts.

I believe that our best counterterrorism strategies will come from field-driven interagency cooperation, relying on the local knowledge and experience of the inter-agency professionals, from a range of agencies, and deployed in strategic areas throughout the world.

Here in Washington, the National Counterterrorism Center is tasked to serve as a center for joint intelligence and joint operational planning, ensuring that we unify our counterterrorism efforts across the government. The NCTC has made great strides in improving terrorist threat information sharing, and is beginning to

coordinate joint operational planning and strategy. Interagency groups such as the Counterterrorism Security Group and the CT Technical Assistance Support Group, also share information and develop policies to counter terrorist threats, drawing on the capabilities and expertise of each government agency. Key USG agencies dealing with threats meet by secure videoconference three times a day to share current information and develop responses to any perceived threat to the U.S. or its interests.

These Washington based interagency efforts and our Regional Strategic Initiatives must intersect, to provide the best global strategic perspectives and resources with the best field perspectives and implementation.

The Way Forward

Wars of the 20th century taught us the need for joint operations rather than separate army, navy, or air operations. 9/11 taught us that we cannot afford to act as independent “stove-piped” agencies; our success against the enemy largely derives from our mastery of joint, highly integrated operations that unify all elements of national power into a coherent whole. The strategy I outlined here today - of building regional partnerships to confront transnational threats and working at the intersections of diplomacy, democracy promotion, economic reconstruction and military security - embodies the transformational diplomacy Secretary Rice outlined in her January 18 speech at Georgetown University. The

State Department is deeply committed to this regional, comprehensive interagency approach. What we need to make it work is unity of effort, as much as unity of command.

My personal commitment to this interagency approach derives from my experience working in many Embassy country teams, being detailed to the FBI after the August 1998 bombings, and working hand-in-hand with the U.S. military in Afghanistan immediately after September 11, 2001. There, small groups of intelligence officers worked closely with the military and local partners to develop an integrated strategy that killed or captured terrorist leadership, denied terrorists safehaven, and ultimately replaced the networks we destroyed with infinitely better institutions and the potential for a better future.

In sum, terrorists exploit political, ethnic, communal and economic grievances. Bringing terrorist leadership to justice, denying terrorists safehaven and addressing the conditions that terrorist exploit so that those we eliminate are not replaced by scores more requires us to use all the elements of national power. This is the case on a policy level - our counterterrorism agenda and our Freedom Agenda are linked for real and strategic reasons. It is also true on a practical level. We are working well and improving our cooperation in Washington. However, our best means of countering the multilayered terrorist threat is to engage coordinated networks of interagency Country Teams operating under the

Ambassador's Chief of Mission authority to bring to bear diplomacy, intelligence, military power, economic assistance, law enforcement and rule of law capacity building, and the power of what America stands for against the terrorist enemy.

This need for inter-agency operations goes far beyond mere coordination or cooperation. It demands that we plan, conduct and structure operations - from the very outset - as part of an intimately connected whole-of-government approach. We are not there yet, but we have made progress.

Mr. Chairman, that completes the formal part of my remarks and I welcome your questions or comments.