

**Opening Statement for Senate Armed Services Subcommittee  
on Emerging Threats and Capabilities**

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Good afternoon, Chairman Hagan, Senator Portman, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the invitation to testify before you this afternoon. As this is my first opportunity as Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict (SO/LIC) to appear before the subcommittee, let me express my gratitude for the consistent and meaningful support you provide to SO/LIC and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM). I have worked in and around the Special Operations Forces (SOF) community for the last 32 years, and I have a deep appreciation of the progress that has been made in the past decades—in no small part due to the support of Congress and this Committee. I believe a critical turning point came when Congress created SO/LIC and USSOCOM through the Goldwater-Nichols legislation and the Nunn-Cohen Amendment over a quarter century ago.

These pivotal pieces of legislation are the foundation of the important work that SOF has done since 9/11, from toppling the Taliban regime to capturing Saddam Hussein to killing Osama bin Laden. With these recent successes, some have made the argument that SOF has now arrived into the “mainstream” within the Department. While I agree that progress has been made in institutionalizing Goldwater-Nichols, this effort remains a work in progress, especially as we look to the coming decade of sustained global demand for SOF and constrained defense budgets.

In recent months, the President has provided clear direction to the Department of Defense—including SO/LIC and USSOCOM—in the form of the National Strategy for Counterterrorism (CT) and the Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (TOC), both of which frame the Defense Department’s role in defending our citizens and interests from these threats. As ASD SO/LIC, I am committed to leading and integrating the Defense Department’s efforts to fully implement these two complimentary and mutually reinforcing strategies.

To this end, the partnership between SO/LIC and USSOCOM will be essential. SO/LIC will continue to support the evolution of USSOCOM as we take on both the challenges of these strategies and the recently released defense strategy “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. Together, we will work to make efficient use of our resources and authorities to address these cross-cutting security threats. We will also be looking at developing and testing new approaches to meeting these evolving threats.

Because terrorism, drug trafficking, and other forms of transnational organized crime are increasingly intertwined, SO/LIC is uniquely positioned to provide policy guidance and program oversight to DoD’s counterterrorism and counter-TOC activities. I am pleased to have sitting beside me two of my deputies—Deputy Assistant Secretaries of Defense Garry Reid and William Wechsler—who each bring a unique perspective to these issues. They look forward to contributing to the discussion during the question and answer portion of the testimony. Both of their offices bring extraordinary expertise to the Department’s efforts to implement the Counterterrorism and Combating Transnational Organized Crime strategies. By integrating our

counterterrorism, counternarcotics, and combating transnational organized crime capabilities, resources, and authorities, the impact of our actions are more strategic, more effective, and make better use of available resources.

Let me first provide you with my perspective on the National Strategy for Counterterrorism. As this committee is well aware, we have made progress in the past decade since the tragedy of 9/11 in confronting al-Qa'ida, its associated forces, and its adherents. I see three primary reasons for our success in preventing another terrorist attack on U.S. soil. First, we have taken down the al-Qa'ida sanctuary in Afghanistan. Second, we have maintained constant pressure on the al-Qa'ida network around the globe, including in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, crushing the ability of al-Qaida to conduct strategic attacks. Lastly, we have built broad international cooperation by developing strong counterterrorism partnerships with countries around the globe.

Now, as we look to the decade ahead, the landscape is changing to some extent. We have ended our combat role in Iraq, and in Afghanistan we are transitioning increasing responsibility to the Afghan government and security forces. What will not change is our focus on aggressively deterring, disrupting, dismantling, and defeating al-Qa'ida and its associated forces and adherents around the world, while maintaining vigilance against other terrorist organizations that threaten or have the potential to threaten the United States and our allies. These efforts will be guided by the principles set forth in the Counterterrorism Strategy: adhering to U.S. core values, building security partnerships, applying CT tools and capabilities appropriately, and building a culture of resilience.

Our national and theater SOF employ a combination of direct and indirect action to implement the strategy. While SOF's direct action capabilities are likely to garner the most attention, just as important—perhaps more so—are the SOF efforts to build the capacity and capabilities of our partners and to shape the global information and ideas environment. In addition to “Global Train and Equip” capacity building efforts often referred to as “section 1206,” other SO/LIC-managed authorities are also critical to our efforts. These include the counternarcotics authorities of sections 1004, 1033, 1021, and 1022 of the National Defense Authorization Act, which in addition to traditional counter-drug support, also allow the Department to enhance the capabilities of the security forces of our foreign partners where there is a link between drug trafficking and terrorism. These efforts often remain largely unnoticed, but have long-term, strategic effects in counterterrorism.

In implementing the Counterterrorism Strategy, we will continue to focus on al-Qa'ida's activities originating from Western Pakistan and the FATA. As I noted earlier, we have made progress on this front, but al-Qa'ida is a highly adaptive organization, and we must continue to work with Pakistan to address threats emanating from this region.

Another important front against al-Qa'ida is in the Arabian Peninsula. Our challenge in this region is twofold. First, al-Qa'ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) poses a direct threat to our interests and the interests of our partners. We've made a number of important gains over the past last year against AQAP, but the group's capabilities and intent to conduct a terrorist attack in the United States continue to represent a serious threat. DoD continues to collaborate extensively with Yemeni

forces on operational matters, and together we are closely monitoring AQAP and regularly improving our understanding of its external attack plots. Efforts to counter AQAP's narrative have also helped delegitimize the group and discourage its efforts to recruit new operatives. Second, a large quantity of financial support from individuals and charities flow from the region to al-Qa'ida and its associated forces and adherents around the world. Addressing both of these threats requires partnership with Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Yemen, Kuwait, and others, to ensure that they have both the capabilities and the will to effectively confront these challenges.

The last area of the Counterterrorism Strategy that I would like to highlight for you today pertains to the global information environment. As I alluded to previously, we know that al-Qa'ida cannot be defeated with kinetic action alone. In order to counter the resonance of Al Qaeda's ideology, our approach must include a balance of capabilities, implemented in close coordination with the interagency, our allies, and local communities.

Recognizing the growing relationship among terrorists, insurgents, drug traffickers, and other criminals, last year the President issued his Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime. This forward-looking strategy seeks to address an emerging, rapidly evolving type of threat to our national security: networks of adversaries that operate at the nexus of organized crime and politically-inspired violence. The convergence of crime, terrorism, and insurgency is, in my view, a burgeoning geo-political trend with grave implications. As the Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper, recently observed, "Terrorists and insurgents will increasingly turn to crime and criminal networks for funding and logistics, in part

because of U.S. and Western success in attacking other sources of their funding. Criminal connections and activities of both Hizballah and AQIM illustrate this trend.”

The Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) recognizes that our traditional focus on countering “drug trafficking organizations” must be expanded to a wider perspective that acknowledges that narcotics trafficking is just one component of the broader challenge of transnational organized crime. Important initial steps in implementing this strategy have been recognizing the growing array of security challenges global criminal networks pose, increasing the understanding of the implications of the nexus among criminals, terrorists, and insurgents, and developing effective policy tools to degrade these threats, to include the ability to track and target the funds that allow these threats to carry out their activities.

The Department plays a largely supporting role to U.S. interagency efforts to combat Transnational Organized Crime. In addition to DoD support to U.S. state, local, and federal law enforcement agencies, DoD is helping partner countries build capacity to address narcotics trafficking and related transnational organized crime within their borders. Critical to these efforts are the Department’s counternarcotics authorities and budget, which have proven to be effective and flexible tools for confronting drug trafficking, including where drug trafficking is linked to other forms of organized crime.

Nowhere is the link between Transnational Organized Crime, insurgency, and terrorism more apparent than in Afghanistan, where the Taliban continues to receive a large percentage of its revenue through the heroin trade. Because of the convergence of these threats, our law enforcement partners such as the Drug Enforcement Administration are employing their expertise and authorities in support of DoD

objectives on the battlefield. Today we are seeing unprecedented integration of military and law enforcement operations. In addition to depriving the enemy of vital narcotics-related revenue, insurgents found to be involved in drug trafficking may be prosecuted under Afghan law and incarcerated for over ten years, taking them off the battlefield and enhancing Afghan government institutions at the same time.

Because the threat networks we face are not limited to a single illicit activity, we must continue to draw upon all elements of our national power to confront them. The best example of what can be achieved through a comprehensive approach of law enforcement, military, and diplomatic support has been in Colombia, where I served as an active duty Special Forces officer. Once on the verge of becoming a narco-state in the 1990's, Colombia today has made substantial progress in improving its security and continues to make progress against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and other criminal groups. Colombia is now an exporter of security in the region, supporting other nations' efforts to confront transnational organized crime. This success is due in great part to "Plan Colombia," Colombia's comprehensive plan for combating drug trafficking and its detrimental effects on Colombian society. The principal credit of the success of Plan Colombia belongs to the Colombian people themselves who stood up to the criminality of terrorist organizations corrupted by the illicit drug trade.

Another important factor in Colombia's success was a fundamental shift in our understanding that the FARC was not simply a political insurgency, but rather a criminal enterprise. Over time, that fundamental change in perspective became the bedrock for facilitating a cohesive, integrated, multi-agency approach to supporting Bogota's efforts

to degrade and defeat the FARC. By conceptualizing the threat differently, we were able to create new lines of engagement and attack, which led to strategic success against a group that posed an existential threat to the Colombian state. Underpinning that success was the support of Congress for a sustained strategy that could evolve and integrate authorities from many agencies into one strategic effort. There may be opportunities to take a similar approach against other adversaries of significant national security concern that are both terrorist and criminal in nature. As we identify these opportunities, we will be working with you and our colleagues across the interagency.

From the Colombia experience, we know that in order to confront increasingly networked threats, we need to be increasingly networked as a government. Active threat networks will exploit the limitations the U.S. government often faces because of separate agency authorities, budgets, and institutional cultures. The Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime is a call to action to leverage all the elements of national power to protect citizens and U.S. national security interests and to enable our foreign partners to do the same.

In conclusion, both of these strategies seek to proactively deter and confront emerging threats to our national security, whether they are terrorists or criminals or, increasingly, individuals operating at the nexus of what are too often conceptual stovepipes. To be effective on both fronts, we must continue to build cooperation across the Defense Department and the U.S. government, while at the same time developing the capacities of like-minded foreign partners. As Assistant Secretary of Defense SO/LIC, I am committed to working with this committee to continue to build our counterterrorism and combating transnational organized crime capabilities so that we



are even more effective in the decade ahead. Thank you again for this opportunity, and I look forward to a frank dialogue during the question and answer session.