

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED**Assistance and Cooperation Strategy for Programs to  
Counter Foreign Terrorist Fighters and Violent Extremist Organizations**

This report is submitted pursuant to section 7073 of the Department of State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act, 2016 (Div. K, P.L. 114-113). This report describes how the Department of State is working to both reduce the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters (FTF) and to counter violent extremism more broadly.

**RELEASE IN PART B7(F),B6**

**Countering Foreign Terrorist Fighters**

**(U) Strategic Context:** During the period 2012-2015, significant numbers of FTFs traveled to Iraq and Syria to fight alongside a number of violent extremist groups, most prominently the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the Nusrah Front. While some of these individuals have been killed in the fighting, thousands have returned home and more will certainly follow. Many of these fighters are returning home with battlefield experience and can pose a direct and immediate threat to their home countries and regions. Amplified by social media, and fueled by local factors, new fighters continue to be attracted to the conflicts in Iraq and Syria and to other regions where ISIL affiliates are active and emerging. North Africa, the Middle East and Europe remain key source regions for FTFs. There is also increasing concern regarding ISIL's presence in Libya, and the travel of FTFs to that conflict zone.

(U) The Department of State has played a pivotal role in the creation of an international framework for addressing the threat from FTFs. In 2014, the Department worked with partners to establish an FTF Working Group and adopt *The Hague-Marrakesh Memorandum on Good Practices for a More Effective Response to the FTF Phenomenon* under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum (GCTF). This memorandum gave practical effect to UN Security Council Resolution 2178, which was adopted on September 24, 2014, during a high-level UNSC meeting chaired by President Obama. Additionally, the U.S.-led Global Coalition to Counter-ISIL established an ISIL-focused Foreign Terrorist Fighters Working Group co-led by Turkey and the Netherlands. In January 2016, the GCTF and the Counter-ISIL FTF Working Groups published the *Hague Implementation Plan on Foreign Terrorist Fighters* to jointly carry forward the work of the respective FTF working groups and implementing relevant up-to-date action plans.

**REVIEW AUTHORITY: Clarke Ellis, Senior Reviewer**

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(U) In part as a result of our efforts, at least 45 countries have passed or updated existing laws to more effectively identify and prosecute FTFs. Thirty-five countries have arrested FTFs, and 12 have successfully prosecuted at least one foreign terrorist fighter. The United States currently has information-sharing arrangements with 50 international partners to identify and track the travel of suspected terrorists, and at least 50 countries, plus the United Nations, now contribute foreign terrorist fighter profiles to INTERPOL, a four hundred percent increase over a two-year period. Several countries have also developed new action plans and programs to counter FTF radicalization and recruitment in their countries, for example in the Western Balkans.

**(SBU) Strategic Objectives:** Looking forward, the State Department will continue to expand and deepen bilateral and multilateral engagement to counter the FTF threat and related radicalization and recruitment to violence. We have identified the following six strategic objectives, which the Department pursues in close partnership with other U.S. government agencies.

1. **(SBU) Work with partners to identify, monitor, and address the travel of foreign terrorist fighters to and from Iraq and Syria and new areas affected by ISIL expansion, such as Libya.** The Department continues to prioritize bilateral engagement with key source and transit countries. Our approach brings together partner countries' homeland security, law enforcement, justice sector, intelligence, diplomatic, military, capacity building, and information sharing efforts. These engagements facilitate increased cooperation and, where appropriate, technical assistance. Such cooperation takes the form of information-sharing arrangements, provision of hardware and software to improve border security and management, financial intelligence exchanges, and support in law enforcement investigations, amongst others. Over the course of the last three years, the State Department has led interagency delegations to countries in Europe, North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia. In the past six months, the Department has prioritized engagement with Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Kuwait, Turkey, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands to increase cooperation to counter FTFs. Following the November Paris attacks, the Department is leading efforts to deploy interagency expert teams to broaden and deepen cooperation with European partners to combat terrorist travel and help reduce the flow of FTFs across their borders. These teams will provide tailored advice in areas such as information sharing, watchlisting, and border security.

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2. **(SBU) Encourage and assist top FTF source and transit countries to employ more robust border and aviation security procedures to identify and interdict potential foreign terrorist fighters and those returning.**

The Department funds a variety of programming that is implemented by our interagency and multilateral partners, including the Department of Homeland Security, to bolster partner nation capacity to secure borders and prevent FTF travel onward to conflict zones and back home to countries of origin. Trainings focus on aviation security, to include traveler screening and airport security practices; maritime security, which encompasses training to deter and interdict materiel to support ISIL (illicit funds, weapons and people) and a variety of border security courses aimed at improving controls at land borders.

3. **(SBU) Enable top FTF source and transit countries to track and interdict travel by FTFs through more robust information sharing, watchlisting, and traveler screening both with the USG and between top FTF source and transit countries.** The United States now has information-sharing arrangements with 50 countries pursuant to Homeland Security Presidential Directive-6 (HSPD-6). Under these arrangements, the United States and foreign partners exchange screening information on known and suspected terrorists, which serves to disrupt and stem the flow of FTFs to ISIL and other terrorist groups. The United States has expanded information sharing with several countries, including Malaysia, Turkey, and some Gulf Cooperation Council countries – many of which were traditionally reluctant to create formal arrangements. Additionally, the Department, working in partnership with the Department of Justice (DOJ) INTERPOL Washington, has launched a new effort in Southeast Asia to enhance law enforcement and border security agencies' access to INTERPOL data, develop protocols and expertise to leverage INTERPOL data, and encourage best practices for interagency and international collaboration to combat the flow of foreign fighters from the region.

4. **(SBU) Encourage and assist top FTF source and transit countries to establish and employ the necessary legislative, administrative, policy and criminal justice frameworks, capabilities, tools and programs to investigate, interdict, divert, prosecute, adjudicate and incarcerate aspirant or returning foreign terrorist fighters.** The Department works with a full range of implementers to help partners develop or improve their

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criminal justice systems to deal with terrorism cases within a rule of law framework. For example, State funds DOJ to help governments draft new legislation where necessary and to assist partner countries to enforce laws designed to address the foreign fighter problem. As a result, countries in the Western Balkans – including Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia – have recently adopted counterterrorism legislation. In addition, the Department is working within the UN system and with regional and sub-regional organizations to develop technical assistance programs that advance the UN Global CT Strategy, UNSCR 2178, and GCTF Good Practices to Counter the Global FTF Phenomenon.

5. **(SBU) Encourage and assist top FTF source and transit countries to counter violent extremism and prevent radicalization to violence, including through community resilience programs and counter-messaging.** Our CVE efforts are guided and shaped by a developing understanding of the local geography, demography, and drivers of recruitment and radicalization to violence: where the hotspots are; who is most susceptible; and why they may be motivated to join. We support a range of FTF-relevant CVE programming including, but not limited to: building the capacity of credible third parties to deliver CT messaging and to develop positive alternatives to the messaging of violent extremists; engaging youth at-risk of radicalization to violence with positive alternatives; empowering women, religious leaders, and civil society more broadly as constructive CVE advocates and activists; amplifying the voices of victims and survivors of terrorism as well as returned/rehabilitated FTFs and/or violent extremists; and supporting rehabilitation and reintegration in prisons and beyond. The Department's CVE programming funds counter-recruitment and counter-messaging efforts. For example, in Southeast Asia, we currently support a series of training workshops to share good practices, approaches, and tools for effective counter-narratives with regional governments and civil society; there is a particular thematic focus on ISIL. In the Western Balkans and Southeast Asia, we support local law enforcement engagement with at-risk communities and civil society groups to raise awareness of radicalization to violence, and design collaborative initiatives to provide positive alternatives in places where there has been some FTF flow.
6. **(SBU) Encourage and assist top FTF source and transit countries to develop comprehensive diversion, and rehabilitation and reintegration**

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**programs for aspirant and returning foreign terrorist fighters, both inside and outside the prison setting.** The Department supports rehabilitation and reintegration programs, which are essential elements to assist FTFs in disengaging from violent behavior. We have taken a number of steps over the past several years to promote rehabilitation and reintegration programs in prisons. For instance, the Department is supporting a DOJ and UN project at high-level security prisons in East Asia that focuses on training correction officials on proper management of terrorist inmates. Since prisons can be places where radicalization to violence can occur, we are also supporting efforts to promote a full range of criminal justice sector tools that can be used in lieu of sentencing an offender to prison. For example, we are supporting a pilot diversion program aimed at potential FTFs and others at risk of recruitment into violent extremism and terrorism. This pilot effort seeks to address the challenges presented by youths who have come to the attention of law enforcement as a result of having come under the influence of violent extremist ideologues or terrorist recruiters. Other programs target returning FTF to help them reintegrate into society and avoid becoming a source of enduring threat. To help partner countries deal with returning FTFs that may be outside of the criminal justice system, we are supporting an initiative being implemented by Hedayah and the International Institute for Justice and Rule of Law (IIJ). This effort, launched in January 2016, is designed to assist countries develop or refine their rehabilitation and reintegration programs, strategies, policies and procedures.

**(SBU) Interagency Coordination:** State co-leads with the National Counterterrorism Center the line of effort to disrupt the flow of FTFs as part of the U.S. government's broader counter-ISIL strategy. In this capacity, State regularly convenes Department and interagency stakeholders to review the status of State-led FTF activities. In addition, in its capacity as a leader of the 66-member Global Coalition to Counter ISIL, State takes the lead in bringing together U.S. interagency partners to engage with Coalition members on addressing the FTF threat.

**Countering Violent Extremism**

**(U) Strategic Context:** A comprehensive approach to address the drivers of violent extremism is critical to advancing the United States' national security and overall foreign policy goals. The 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development

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Review states that State and USAID will work to enhance, refine, and elevate ongoing CVE efforts, particularly those focused on prevention. State and USAID have developed a joint strategy to guide how we will work jointly and leverage the range of available diplomatic and development resources to have a demonstrable impact to prevent and counter the spread of violent extremism.

**(U) Strategic Objectives:** The joint State and USAID CVE strategy, which is being released publicly, outlines the following five objectives:

1. Expand international political will, partnerships, and expertise to better understand the drivers of violent extremism and mobilize effective interventions;
2. Encourage and assist partner governments to adopt more effective policies and approaches to prevent and counter the spread of violent extremism, including changing unhelpful practices where necessary;
3. Employ foreign assistance tools and approaches, including development, to reduce specific political or social and economic factors that contribute to community support for violent extremism in identifiable areas or put particular segments of a population at high risk of violent extremist radicalization and recruitment to violence;
4. Empower and amplify locally credible voices that can change the perception of violent extremist groups and their ideology among key demographic segments; and
5. Strengthen the capabilities of government and non-governmental actors to isolate, intervene with, and promote the rehabilitation and reintegration of individuals caught in the cycle of radicalization to violence.

**(U) Framework for Prioritization:** To maximize our diplomatic, policy, and programmatic efforts and finite resources, State and USAID will set clear priorities for CVE engagement and assistance. Specifically, State and USAID will seek to focus CVE engagement and assistance based on the following factors:

- **Extent of Threat and Risk to U.S. Interests:** We will prioritize CVE efforts to address radicalization and recruitment to violence by terrorist organizations that pose the highest level of threat and risk to the United States, U.S. persons, our allies, and other U.S. interests;
- **Potential for Emergence and Expansion of Violent Extremism:** In an effort to prevent the emergence of violent extremism, CVE programs will prioritize areas with evidence of a high risk of deepening or expanding

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support for violent extremism. This will especially include areas on the periphery of current terrorist safe havens, and outside those areas in the midst of conflict;

- **Ability to Reinforce Political Will:** CVE efforts will be prioritized where governments and/or sub-national and non-governmental leaders have demonstrated strong political will to address drivers of violent extremism in a responsible manner, or where political will is lacking, but can be cultivated, and is determined to be essential to effectively counter violent extremism; and
- **Prospects for CVE Results, Impact and Innovation:** CVE efforts will be directed to countries and regions that can yield results, as well as be expanded, scaled up and/or made sustainable. We will also coordinate with and, when possible, leverage ongoing assistance by other donors.

**(U) Implementation:** The Secretary of State has directed the Bureau of Counterterrorism to guide and coordinate CVE policy, programs, and assistance for the Department. To reflect this expanded role, the Department is working with Congress to rename the bureau to the Bureau of Counterterrorism and Countering Violent Extremism and allocate additional staffing resources. USAID is also establishing a CVE Secretariat staffed to coordinate and synchronize its efforts.

A working group of core State, USAID, and interagency stakeholders will oversee and coordinate implementation of the new joint CVE strategy. Based on the above criteria on prioritization, the working group will agree upon a set of focus regions and countries for expanded, integrated CVE diplomatic engagement and programming by State and USAID. The working group will encourage and work with interested embassies and USAID missions to develop integrated CVE plans for focus regions and countries, especially to promote coordinated efforts. This will include ensuring programming is tied into the Integrated Country Strategies and the Country Development and Cooperation Strategies, as appropriate.

**(U) Measuring Results and Effects:** State and USAID will measure progress toward achieving the new joint CVE strategy's objectives, developing a results framework for measuring progress. CVE programs will be measured against clearly stated objectives that are linked to the strategic objectives described above and accompanied by clear, well-developed and resourced monitoring and evaluation plans. To the extent possible, State and USAID will develop a set of

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common indicators to measure outputs and outcomes across CVE assistance programs, and will evaluate the longer-term effects of CVE programming. State and USAID will continue to learn from these efforts and ensure that future efforts are guided by both qualitative and quantitative monitoring information, evidence of results and effects, and where appropriate, innovation.

**Vetting Procedures and Monitoring and Evaluation:**

(U) The Department and USAID take careful steps to ensure recipients of foreign assistance are properly vetted and to regularly monitor and evaluate our foreign assistance programming.

(U) The Department and USAID are committed to effective program management and stewardship of the assistance funds administered under its direction. This includes:

- Coordinated strategic planning across the FTF and CVE lines of effort;
- Introduction of a results-focused approach to program design and management aimed at improving performance, outcomes, and accountability with an overarching goal of ensuring the sustainability of our collective efforts;
- Commitment to monitoring all programs, which provides crucial information to ensuring the success of Department-funded programming; and
- Conducting objective, third-party evaluations consistent with established best practices and the requirements for program evaluation.

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Approved: CT – Justin Siberell, Acting Coordinator

Drafted: CT/FTF [redacted] x [redacted]

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|          | J - [redacted]       | ok   | B7(F) |
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|          | CT/SPI - [redacted]  | ok   | B7(F) |
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