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- Thank you to WINEP and particularly Matt Levitt for organizing this event. Many of you have been deeply involved in counterterrorism efforts over the years, and I look forward to hearing your views about today's challenges.
- After twenty years – post 9/11 – of designing and implementing a national security structure focused on counterterrorism, it is a good time to assess what we have accomplished and how counterterrorism priorities and policies are evolving. This is especially true as the global terrorism landscape also continues to evolve and as we face other strategic priorities, such as countering challenges from China and Russia, and cybersecurity risks.

Terrorism Trends and Threat Picture

- As counterterrorism practitioners, we need to recognize this constant, fastmoving evolution, and we must adapt and calibrate our approaches to account for the much more complex operating environment. There are a few overarching themes and trends to consider when assessing today's threats:
 - Our intensive national and international focus on counterterrorism since 2001 has made it much more difficult – albeit not impossible – for terrorists to pull off an attack on the U.S. homeland on the scale of 9/11.
 - Terrorists are rapidly expanding to new regions plagued by lack of security and weak governance, often exploiting and leveraging local grievances and mixing with criminal elements to create a toxic mix of terrorism, organized crime, narcotics trafficking, illegal mining, and other illicit activities.
 - Terrorist tools and tactics are always evolving, often in response to effective counterterrorism pressure. For example, we see terrorists shifting from large scale, mass casualty attacks, to using more low-tech but still lethal tools.
 - Finally, terrorists of all types are effectively using the Internet, especially social media platforms, to inspire and radicalize individuals to act alone in conducting attacks, which can be far more challenging to detect beforehand.

- I'll make a few comments on how we see the threat environment.
- ISIS's global presence has proved to be far reaching, despite the D-ISIS Coalition's complete liberation of the physical territory ISIS once controlled in Iraq and Syria. We are deeply concerned about the thousands of foreign terrorist fighters and their associated family members who remain detained in Syria and Iraq. This is not a sustainable situation, and we continue to address it as a top priority. These individuals need to be repatriated – and, depending on their specific circumstances, either prosecuted or rehabilitated and reintegrated – otherwise, they will contribute to a new generation of terrorists.
- Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates also remain an enduring threat despite significant leadership losses. We are concerned about the expansion of both ISIS and al-Qa'ida branches and networks in Africa and elsewhere in the past several years, as these affiliates are exploiting under-governed spaces, conflict zones, and security gaps, adding to rising instability in many regions and raising concerns about external operations plotting.
- Iran remains the major state sponsor of terrorism, providing funding and direction to a range of terrorist partners and proxies. Iran continues to engage in a wide array of destabilizing activities in the Middle East and beyond.
- We are also grappling with the growing transnational threat from Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists (REMVE) actors. White supremacist, anti-government, and like-minded individuals and groups are connecting across borders to target their perceived adversaries.
- Finally, the decision to withdraw troops from Afghanistan requires new thinking on how we will address terrorist threats that emanate from that country. This includes threats from ISIS-K today and a potential reconstitution of AQ-Core's operational capabilities in the future.
- While this may present a daunting threat picture, we and our partners have made tremendous progress over the last twenty years. The list is extensive, but this recounting is by no means exhaustive.

- We have sharply degraded and continue to pressure ISIS and AQ leadership and affiliates and have also mobilized our allies to increase pressure on Hizballah, al-Shabaab and other similar groups.
- We have reshaped the international counterterrorism architecture, creating overlapping layers of information sharing, watchlisting, screening, and vetting to dramatically improve aviation and border security.
- Since 2001, the United States has designated hundreds of individuals and entities as terrorists, and we have assisted partner governments to effectively implement international standards against terrorist financing.
- We are deploying foreign assistance to strengthen partnerships, increase global information sharing, and build civilian capacity in CVE, threat finance, border security, and law enforcement finishes (investigation, arrest, prosecution, and incarceration), all aimed at countering evolving terrorist threats, preventing the spread of violent extremism, and reducing the need for U.S. military boot on the ground.

Counterterrorism at a Crossroads:

- As we look to the next 20 years, the Biden-Harris Administration is strengthening the foundation of policies and principles that will guide our work moving forward. We are working to keep pace with the changing landscape by remaining clear-eyed about current and emerging threats and by integrating our global counterterrorism efforts into the broader range of national security threats and challenges. The Administration has called for a greater investment in tools and capabilities to avert threats before they become imminent.
- The result is we are in the middle of a major shift from a heavy reliance on a DoD-led counterterrorism approach, which emphasized so-called “kinetic” activity and the U.S. military directly removing terrorists from the battlefield to a counterterrorism approach that prioritizes diplomacy, international and local partnerships, and civilian-led capacity building. This approach will put greater emphasis on law enforcement and the rule of law and is one where efforts to limit terrorist radicalization and recruitment will take on increased importance.
- To respond to threats as they develop, we need a sustainable approach flexible enough to detect, identify, and respond to threats before they reach the United States or our allies and partners. We also need to keep our eyes on – and invest

in – preventing the proliferation of the next generation of recruits before they start joining or supporting terrorist groups – or committing lone terrorist acts.

- At the same time, we must be realistic about diminishing resources for our counterterrorism efforts, especially as more attention is devoted to other pressing national security issues, such as recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, addressing climate change, countering cybersecurity challenges, or managing China and Russia’s increasingly aggressive activities.
- Burden sharing with international allies – such as we are doing with the 83-member Global D-ISIS Coalition, probably the most successful multilateral platform ever assembled to combat terrorism – will become even more important to build the capabilities of front-line partners.
- Thanks again for hosting me and I look forward to hearing the comments from DoJ OPDAT Deputy Director Rose and taking some questions.