

Statement for the Record  
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Mr. Chairman:

I want to thank you and the members of the Committee for inviting me to testify today on a topic of great importance to the security of the United States. In doing so, however, I hasten to remind the committee that I have been out of government for nearly two years now, and thus have not had access to privileged information beyond what is available through open sources, for quite some time. Further, I have no special knowledge of current policies or approaches being taken in the counter-terrorism struggle by the Intelligence Community, or other elements of the Executive Branch. Thus, as the Committee will appreciate, I do not pretend to offer to the committee new information or insights into current policies or intelligence collection methodologies. What I believe I do bring to the table, however, is a certain amount of judgment and perspective, based on long experience in dealing with the topics being discussed today. I therefore hope that the insights and opinions I offer today will be of assistance to the Committee, in its important oversight capacity, in testing the assumptions and challenging the current, established practices of the Intelligence Community, and indeed of the U.S. policy community, as they seek to protect the U.S. homeland and our allies from the terrorists who are sworn to do us harm.

Regarding the ability of Osama Bin Laden to evade capture by the U.S. or its allies, I do not think this is so terribly surprising. Before delving into the reasons for this view, however, I should perhaps describe the assumptions upon which this view is based. Like most experts, my strong suspicion is that Bin Laden is most likely taking refuge in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas on the Pakistani side of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, somewhere north of the Khyber Pass and south of Chitral. I suspect he is being hosted by a faithful adherent in a residence compound in that remote, hostile and mountainous area. I doubt very much that Bin Laden is traveling at all, and suspect that the number of individuals aware of his location is extremely small. Assumptions regarding Bin Laden's location may be wildly incorrect, of course. It's possible he could be in hidden in an apartment in a densely populated part of Karachi. What I believe is almost certain, however, is that Bin Laden is minimizing his exposure by remaining in one place, keeping a very low profile, and keeping the number of those aware of his location to a minimally small number. Perhaps Bin Laden's greatest point of vulnerability is his regular, though infrequent communications via audio and, occasionally video tape. While the technology necessary to make these tapes is readily available and demands no special infrastructure, the dissemination of these tapes presumably relies upon a courier or couriers, and thus is a point of vulnerability for Bin

Laden.

Under these circumstances, however, and provided that discipline is maintained, I believe that Bin Laden could remain successfully in hiding for an indefinite period. We should not forget that Eric Rudolph, a high-profile terrorist at the top of the FBI Most Wanted List, was able to avoid capture in the mountains of North Carolina for over five years, despite active efforts both by officials and by private individuals to effect his capture, and despite a \$1 million reward on his head. From all accounts, Rudolph had little if any assistance, and had to move widely to forage for food. Bin Laden is most probably in a far more advantageous position to elude capture.

Broadly speaking, I believe that a successful effort to identify Bin Laden's whereabouts would have to rely upon one of two general methodologies. The first we might call a "network-based" approach. The idea would be that for Bin Laden to communicate as he does, and even to retain minimal contact with his organization, he would have to rely upon at least a minimal number of trusted personnel to act as couriers. Even if a highly disciplined program of compartmentation were employed, the capture and questioning of a senior Al-Qa'ida (AQ) official having even indirect contact with Bin Laden would have to be able to identify an individual, or at least a methodology by which communication reached him. This would offer at least the possibility of tracing the network back to someone with direct knowledge of Bin Laden's whereabouts.

Use of the network approach in these circumstances is problematic, however. First, it would most likely rely on some compromise of AQ's strict discipline, either involving its compartmentation of information, or its use of what we would call impersonal communications, which serve to create "fire-breaks" in the human chain leading back to Bin Laden. AQ, as we know, is a highly disciplined organization. Second, it relies upon the ability to capture alive a knowledgeable AQ official. It is most likely that such knowledgeable AQ officials are themselves located in the Tribal Areas. While a number of senior AQ officials have met their demise in the Tribal Areas in the years since 2001, all have been as a result of lethal strikes. These strikes preclude the capture of individuals, their documents, or of their electronic media, which might provide hints of Bin Laden's whereabouts.

The second broad approach we might refer to as a "local informant" approach. This approach assumes that wherever Bin Laden is hiding, there must be at least some resultant anomaly in the area, such as the occasional appearance of unknown, outside visitors; a guest house on a compound to which local visitors are never granted access; or food consumption at a compound out of keeping with the apparent number of its inhabitants. Such indicators would not be definitive by any means, but would be triggers for systematic investigation. The areas of northern Pakistan and Afghanistan of concern to us here are not only extensive, but highly atomized demographically and anthropologically, and the inhabitants of these remote valleys are highly suspicious of outsiders. Thus, the search for the anomalies described above would rely upon contact with an extensive number of local informants, each of whom would be very limited in the geography he could cover. Clearly, to have any chance of acquiring useful lead

information, one would have to greatly narrow the number of areas to be examined, and those would have to be strictly prioritized. I believe it is fair to say that there are certain areas which are more likely than others to be hiding places for Bin Laden. Bin Laden is less likely, for instance, to be hiding in an area dominated by Shi'a, or by Isma'ilis. He is probably more likely to be hosted by someone whose links to the Taliban or to local Islamic extremist groups, such as the Tehrik-e Nafaz Shariat Muhammadi (TNSM), are well known, and predate Bin Laden's flight from Afghanistan. This approach would require a great deal of demographic, anthropological, tribal and organizational research, as well as a very disciplined and systematic approach to acquisition of informants who would normally be well below any threshold of interest on the part of intelligence collectors.

Clearly, neither approach is easy, and the latter approach has the further disadvantage of being unconnected to the broader effort to identify, locate, and capture or kill senior AQ cadres.

Although the effort to locate and neutralize Bin Laden is important, it pales in comparison with the importance of the broader effort to counter AQ in the Pak-Afghan border region. The fact that AQ has been able to reconstitute a fairly effective safehaven in parts of the FATA, and has increased in strength, particularly since September 2006, is rather well-documented, and is not something I would explore in depth here. It seems clear, however, that AQ currently has both the physical and psychological space it needs to plan, encourage, and support terrorist activities not only in the region, but in Western Europe and therefore, I would argue, in the U.S. as well. A series of actual and would-be serious terrorist incidents in Western Europe, extending back to the London transit bombings of July 2005, have been tied, to one degree or another, to support from the Pakistani tribal areas. Given the relative ease of travel between Europe and the U.S., it seems likely that the trend will extend to the U.S. as well. Indeed, it is somewhat surprising that it has not done so yet.

The effort to roll back AQ in the border area and deny it safehaven is as difficult as it is important. I will not attempt in this short statement to completely deconstruct and examine the many different aspects of this effort which will be necessary to achieve success. I will, however, cite a number of factors at play, and invite your questions, so that I and my colleagues on today's panel can attempt to elucidate them. First, I would like to stress that the twin, connected challenges of effectively attacking AQ in the Pak-Afghan border area and permanently denying it safehaven there cannot be accomplished by the U.S. unilaterally. The U.S. can, through its policies, either greatly help or hinder the effort, but it will be utterly reliant upon the Afghans and, in particular, the Pakistanis, to achieve success. Second, we must remember that the two broad elements of our CT strategy in the area – to kill or capture AQ terrorists and to isolate them and their dedicated supporters from the local population so as to eliminate their safehaven – inevitably work against each other. That does not mean that we can cease one in favor of the other, but we must be prepared to accept that there will be inherent contradictions in our approach which will have to be carefully managed. Third, our task is being progressively complicated by the increasingly close cooperation among AQ, the Afghan

Taliban, and local Pakistani extremist groups falling under the loose umbrella of the Tehrik-e Taliban. This progression has its roots in the period immediately after 9-11, and is unlikely to be reversed. On the positive side, however, the combination of unrelenting intimidation of the extremists against local tribal leaders in the FATA, many of whom they have murdered, and the wave of suicide and other attacks perpetrated against innocent people in the tribal areas, in other parts of the Northwest Frontier, and even in settled areas of Pakistan -- to include the assassination of Benazir Bhutto -- have helped to galvanize popular opinion against AQ and the extremists who support them throughout Pakistan, to include the Tribal Areas. As a consequence, there have been at least some nascent indications that local leaders in the FATA may be motivated to counter the extremists. These efforts must be vigorously supported.

Signs of popular motivation to counter AQ and the extremists are particularly important. Such locally-based efforts represent the only long-term, sustainable way of countering the extremists and denying safehaven to AQ and to those who pose a threat to our own security. As in Iraq, locally-based opposition to the extremists would be an important element in an effective counter-insurgency program whose ultimate goal would be to more fully incorporate the tribal areas into the rest of Pakistan, and thus bring these areas under effective governmental control.

With regard to the larger, global threat posed by AQ, and the possible policy changes necessary to counter it, I would stress three elements. First, Iraq: It is critical that the commitment of indigenous elements in the Sunni-dominated areas of Iraq to counter AQ in Iraq be maintained and sustained. This is all that stands between us and an established AQ safehaven in western Iraq. As it seems most unlikely that a Shi'a-dominated government will move vigorously or systematically to provide an institutionalized basis to maintain the U.S.-backed Sunni militias, a sustained U.S. commitment to these local institutions, in some form, will be important for some time to come. I believe that such a commitment can be maintained with far fewer U.S. troops than are currently deployed in Iraq.

Second, I would stress the importance of our cooperative international relationships to the world-wide struggle against AQ. Without this worldwide web of relationships with cooperating intelligence and security services, the U.S. would be virtually powerless to confront AQ beyond our own shores. Therefore, capacity-building -- the enhancement of CT-related intelligence and investigative capabilities on the part of our partners -- is among the most important elements of our overall global CT strategy, though it gets relatively little attention and, in the zero-sum contest for resources in the Intelligence Community, is often relegated to the status of a neglected step-child.

Finally, I would suggest the importance of a serious U.S. engagement in what is often referred to as the "War of Ideas." It is widely understood that in a contest in which our enemy is more properly understood as a popular movement, rather than as a discrete, unified and disciplined organization, countering the enemy's propaganda and undermining his popular appeal become critical elements in the strategic battle. Otherwise, we run the serious risk of waging a highly competent and effective tactical

struggle, at the potential cost of strategic defeat. While the need for such engagement is widely understood, from my perspective there has been little coherent, realistic or effective thought given to the issue within government, and still less effective policy implementation. This is not the place to provide a lengthy explanation of how to win the war of ideas, but I would like to make a number of relevant, fundamental points. First, I think it is important to understand that although the U.S. in particular, and the West more generally may be the main targets of AQ, this is fundamentally not our war. Rather, the War on Terrorism is fundamentally a struggle within the Islamic world for control of the Islamic world. The reason for AQ's focus on the U.S. and the West are both symbolic and practical. AQ and those who share its Salafist ideology see the U.S. and the West as the main props beneath unpopular Muslim governments which would otherwise fall before an Islamist wave. They see attacks on the West as a means of driving the West from the Islamic world, thus setting the stage for their own political domination. Second, they see the U.S. and the West more broadly as enemies of the Muslims, either attacking Muslims directly (as in Iraq and Afghanistan), or consistently supporting (or at least failing to effectively counter) non-Muslim countries who are popularly seen as oppressors of the Muslims, whether in Palestine, in Kashmir, in Bosnia, in Chechniya or elsewhere. This latter element of the AQ narrative is a primary motivator in their efforts to recruit terrorist cadres and, equally important, a primary means to appeal to the broad mass of the Muslim population -- opposition to the U.S. being one of the few things upon which a majority of the Muslims can agree. This perception of the U.S. on the part of many in the Islamic world is particularly damaging in two primary respects. First, it makes it very difficult for Muslim governments which otherwise are natural allies of the U.S. in the war on terrorism to cooperate with us openly, given the unpopularity of their doing so. Second, it creates a strong climate of ambivalence within the mass of the otherwise moderate majority of Muslims, who would otherwise not be inclined to support the terrorists, but who are not motivated to actively oppose the terrorists so long as they are seen to be good Muslims opposing the perceived oppression of the U.S. Thus, quietly supporting Islamic governments to effectively oppose terrorism and working to undercut the AQ narrative are important elements of the overall struggle.

I think it is important to stress up-front my view that in their long-term effort to consolidate political control over the Islamic world, AQ, related terrorist organizations, and the Salafist movement from which they spring are destined to lose. Their program has little inherent appeal to the broad majority of Muslims. Moreover, their repressive and intimidationist tactics make potent enemies for them wherever they hold sway. We have seen this clearly in western Iraq, and are beginning to see it in South Asia as well. The fact that AQ is destined to lose in the ideological struggle over the Islamic world is not a cause of satisfaction, however, as the struggle promises to be a long one, and in the meantime the lethal threat of Islamically-inspired terrorism in the West will remain a clear and present danger. Thus, even if one accepts the conclusion that our enemies are destined to lose the "real" struggle for dominance in the Islamic world, effective engagement in a "war of ideas" will be a vitally important element in our efforts to contain and foreshorten a lengthy conflict in which terrorist losses in the West, to include the U.S., could easily and perhaps catastrophically mount.

In countering the AQ narrative, however, it is important to understand the real problem, which is U.S. policy and the perceptions of it. All too often, Americans -- very much to include U.S. officials -- misperceive our problem as one of being misunderstood by the Muslim world. They believe the solution, therefore, is one of better PR: If only we could explain ourselves better, we would counter negative perceptions of us in the Islamic world. This is a fundamental misperception on our part. Make no mistake, there is much misunderstanding of the U.S. throughout the Muslim world, which often falls victim to conspiratorial thinking, particularly where the U.S. is concerned. The main problem, however, is U.S. policy, where the U.S. has consistently failed to use its considerable power and influence to settle endemic problems -- particularly in Palestine and Kashmir - - which have festered for generations now, and which fundamentally color Muslim perceptions of U.S. intentions. It is not so much a matter of settling endemic situations in which Muslims are perceived to be victimized on terms completely favorable to the Muslims. The point, however, is to solve them.

In creating a policy environment in which we are able to effectively counter the AQ narrative, I believe there are two watchwords which are key, and which should play to U.S. strengths: Justice and Democracy. If U.S. policy were more clearly oriented, both rhetorically and substantively, toward addressing instances of fundamental injustice in the Islamic world and elsewhere, it could have a profound impact in countering the AQ narrative. Again, this does not necessarily mean bringing about a solution to endemic conflicts which meet maximalist Muslim goals, but it does mean solving them in a manner which fairly addresses fundamental needs and concerns of the Muslims.

Secondly, a far more sincere, effective, and consistent advocacy of democratization in the Islamic world could be a critically important part of the effort to counter AQ and its Salafist adherents. It is important to remember that terrorism is the tactic of the weak. Terrorism will be embraced by some -- and tolerated by many more -- when legitimate means of redressing grievances are unavailing. If we wish to counter terrorism as a tactic for addressing grievances, we must work clearly and consistently to make legitimate, democratic means of redress available. In recent years, the putative U.S. commitment to democracy has been largely abandoned in practice, which has only fed cynicism within the Islamic world concerning U.S. intentions. This does not mean that democracy promotion should be simple-minded and heedless of the differing realities at work in different countries. Steady promotion of democracy, albeit at different paces and through different means in different places, however, will be a necessary element of any effective, long-term U.S. effort to counter the use of terrorism.