

TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION ON COUNTERING GLOBAL TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, ENERGY, THE
ENVIRONMENT AND CYBER

AND

SUBCOMMITTEE ON
MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND GLOBAL
COUNTERTERRORISM

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TRANSATLANTIC COOPERATION ON COUNTERING GLOBAL TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM

Thursday, September 23, 2021

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT,
AND CYBER,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, JOINT WITH THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND
GLOBAL TERRORISM
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:11 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. William R. Keating (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. KEATING. The House Foreign Affairs subcommittee will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare recess of the committee at any point, and all members will have 5 days to submit statements, extraneous materials, and questions for the record, subject to the length and limitation of the rules.

To insert something into the record, please have our staff email the previously mentioned address or contact full committee staff.

Please keep your video function on at all times, even when you are not recognized by the chair. Members are responsible for muting and unmuting themselves, so please remember to mute yourself after you finish speaking. Consistent with House Resolution 965 and the accompanying regulations, staff will only mute members and witnesses as appropriate when they are not under recognition to eliminate background noise.

I see that we have got a quorum. I now recognize myself for opening remarks pursuant to this notice. We are holding a hearing today entitled Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism. I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

This month, on the 20th anniversary of September 11, I attended a memorial service in my district to mourn the loss of all those who died that day, including 206 Massachusetts residents, and to honor the sacrifice made by others to prevent such an atrocious attack on our country from ever happening again.

During the service, I was struck by how quickly 20 years can go by. It is truly remarkable how our global society is fundamentally altered in so many years and ways responsible as a result of this action which opened our eyes to the threat of Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism. At the same time, I realize how important our transatlantic alliance has been for keeping us all safe and decided to hold a hearing to explore what mechanism and what actions

were taken to build in the year since 9/11. As such, this hearing will cover the successes, challenges, and opportunities of our transatlantic collaboration to counterterrorism and violent extremism.

But before I make my opening statement, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Chairman Deutch for his leadership and for holding this hearing. Your work highlighting multilateral counterterrorism efforts through the subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa, of which I have been a member, is vitally important, and I hope we can continue to work together to highlight transatlantic cooperation in this space.

Let me turn to the topic we are here to discuss today. Since World War II, the United States and Europe has created the strongest military alliance the world has ever seen. Together, we have committed ourselves to our collective defense and made a promise to show up when needed. With that promise in place, after 9/11, our NATO partners did just that. With article V triggered, they came to our defense, and since, our allies have staunchly served alongside us in places like Afghanistan and Iraq, often making the greatest of sacrifices, just as our American soldiers have, to ensure the safety and security of all our citizens.

Alongside our activities on the ground, the U.S.-EU cooperation importantly has also expanded our ability to share information and to share lessons learned. We built robust mechanisms meant to counter terrorism and violent extremism such as money laundering, trafficking in humans, drugs, nuclear and radiological substances, terrorist financing, repatriation, and judicial proceedings for foreign fighters, container security, and irregular migration, just to name a few.

The EU and the U.S. have also simplified their extradition procedures and promoted mutual legal assistance. As a result, the U.S. is Europol's largest partner in terms of the number of joint cases conducted, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is the U.S. agency that contributes the highest volume of information to the EU. Altogether, these agreements, institutions, and rules are vital for us to continue to live in relative piece, and achieve security and prosperity for all of our citizens.

Now, in a time when we are reviewing the state of Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism, it is more important than ever to remember what we have created so far and recommit ourselves to those mechanisms that ensure our way of life which is grounded on the values of freedom, democracies, and human rights.

The question now is how the United States and Europe can maintain this transatlantic bond that served as a bulwark against threats to our collective security.

To answer this critical question, my colleagues and I have invited a group of incredibly knowledgeable experts with a diverse range of professional experiences. They include Deputy Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs at the European Commission, Olivier Onidi, founder and CEO of Moonshot, Vidhya Ramalingam. I hope I get that correctly. I apologize. I will get it before this hearing is over. The Royal United Services Institute, Raffaello Pantucci, and the Washington Institute's Dr. Matthew Levitt.

As longstanding experts in the field of counterterrorism and preventing the spread of global violent extremism, you will be able to

give concrete recommendations on the ways that the United States and the European Union can bolster cooperation in the areas such as data sharing, privacy, deradicalization and radicalization prevention initiatives, terrorism financing and sanctions, and irregular migration for foreign fighters. We thank you for being here today.

President Biden highlighted the central lesson of the September 11 attacks when he said, we saw something all too rare, a true sense of national unity, unity and resilience, a capacity to recover and repair in the face of trauma. It is at our most vulnerable in the push and pull of all of this makes us human, that unites us, that gives us our greatest strength.

I could not agree more with the sentiment and venture to expand it to encompass transatlantic unity as one of the top priorities of myself and our respective subcommittees. With that, I welcome an honest assessment today, and we have been here joining you at this critical time, a time when we need to grow in our mutual quest to counter the threat of terrorism and global violent extremism.

I now will turn to Ranking Member Wilson for his opening statement.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you for calling this hearing today. With the increasing invigoration, scope, and capability and funding of international terrorist organizations, cooperation and coordination with our friends and allies in Europe to combat and prevent terrorism have never been more critical, especially as Afghanistan has now become a safe haven for terrorist training. I am particularly hopeful for the United States' relationship with the EU and NATO partners to conduct counterterrorism operations and share critical information.

Technology, sadly, has made recruiting and proliferation of extremist content cheap and easy which means we must recommit ourselves to solving this evolving problem. One area that we must close the gap with EU is in regard to the designation of terrorist groups who pose a threat to our mutual friend and ally, Israel, and the United States and European Union countries.

Iranian-backed Islamic extremist terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas pose an existential threat to Israeli families and seek to destabilize regional and normalization efforts, and yet, there is reluctance to name Hezbollah's political wing as a terrorist group.

A week ago, it was reported that Hezbollah imported Iranian fuel into Lebanon through Syria, welcomed by banners blatantly reading, quote, thank you, Iran, thank you, Assad Syria, end of quote. There is no question that the Iranian regime seeks to export its draconian ideology as is evident by Hezbollah presence in Latin America.

I was grateful to introduce a bipartisan bill this week in Congress to address this issue and identify authoritarian regimes working with the Iranian-backed terrorist groups in the western hemisphere.

We appreciate our distinguished witnesses for their expertise, and I look forward to hearing from each of you, and I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. I now recognize Ranking Member Fitzpatrick for his opening statement.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Thank you, Chairman Keating, also to Chairman Deutch and Ranking Member Wilson—

Mr. KEATING. I believe you are muted.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Can you hear me, Chairman?

Mr. KEATING. I can hear you. I now recognize Ranking Member Fitzpatrick for his opening statement.

Mr. FITZPATRICK. Thank you, Chairman Keating, and also to Chairman Deutch and Ranking Member Wilson for holding this important hearing and to our esteemed panel of witnesses for being with us here today.

Twenty years ago, our Nation was galvanized into action by the horrific terror attacks on September 11 of 2001, and our response was swift, and it was comprehensive. The United States bolstered law enforcement and intelligence capabilities. We created the Department of Homeland Security, coordinated information sharing between agencies and our allies overseas, and our military was operationalized.

In less than 24 hours after the attacks, the North Atlantic Council invoked article V, collective defense clause, for the first time in the alliance's history. We are forever grateful for how our NATO allies joined us in our time of need, sacrificing greatly alongside of our own Armed Forces.

And as was the case in 2001, we are stronger when we work together. And for this reason, we continue to need our transatlantic allies to share the burden of what is required in the global play and the global war on terror. Therefore, it is my hope today that our witnesses can discuss how the U.S. can better coordinate our counterterrorist strategies with our closest allies.

Today, the United States counterterrorism efforts have been tactically successful. Major attacks have been foiled, terrorist networks have been broken, and the United States Government's data base of known or suspected terrorists has grown substantially. While our capabilities have grown with experience, the threat posed by terrorism is far from eradicated.

Our campaign to eliminate Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism has revealed ugly truths about the origins of this phenomenon. Terrorism is fueled by local drivers and respects no borders.

Therefore, to stop radicalization, attention to good governance, support for the rule of law, economic stability, and public health must all be tools used to address this worldwide issue.

It is my hope today that Dr. Levitt can expand on the points he made in his written testimony about utilizing soft power solutions to bolster civilian counterterrorism capacity and establishing preventive methods to get ahead of the radicalization curve. Soft power developments offer sustainable, long-term solutions to counterterrorism and must be sync'd with the strategies of our allies.

As a former FBI special agent myself, I would also be remiss not to mention that Dr. Levitt worked as a counterintelligence analyst at the FBI in the wake of September 11. I would like to thank you, sir, for your service to our country, and I look forward to hearing from you and our other witnesses this afternoon. I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative Fitzpatrick.

I would now like to recognize and turn the gavel over to the chairman, Chairman Deutch, who will conduct the hearing, and then I am sure introduce his opening statement. Chairman Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks very much, Chairman Keating. I am so glad to join you today for this really important and timely hearing on transatlantic cooperation and countering violent extremism. We are here—and I appreciate your leadership bringing us together.

We are here today 20 years after the events of September 11 which profoundly changed the global approach to counterterrorism. We are here after 20 years of war in Afghanistan which our NATO partners stood side by side with our troops, and we are here less than a month after that war now has come to a close. What happens next is certainly a question on everyone's mind. And there is no doubt that our withdrawal from Afghanistan, while the right thing to do, gave some of our transatlantic partners pause.

Twenty years ago, the collective belief was that violent radical Islamic terrorism posed the greatest threat to our homeland and our interests. In the aftermath of 9/11, the U.S. and European partners worked together to track suspects, funding streams, and collect intelligence in order to thwart future attacks.

Certainly, even as Al Qaeda and Afghanistan was being decimated, Al Qaeda affiliates in the Arabian peninsula, across Africa, and elsewhere continued to pose dangerous threats. The formation of ISIS and its affiliates changed the terror landscape as Americans and Europeans were threatened, kidnapped, and killed.

Since 2014, horrific ISIS-inspired attacks in France, the UK, the Netherlands, and Belgium have forced the EU to grapple with a new wave of terror and the political consequences of balancing freedom and human rights with security. Although ISIS' territory may be depleted, we know that its propaganda machine continues to actively recruit and inspire new followers.

In recent years, we have also seen the global rise of violent while nationalism and far right terrorism, and that terrorism that disproportionately affected the United States and many European Nations. In the U.S., our deadliest attacks, be it the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh, the Charleston AME Church massacre, those were carried out by white nationalists.

With the rise of social media and online propaganda, we face a new challenging of lone wolf attackers, those radicalized online and inspired to commit deadly acts without the planning and backing of any specific terror group. We have seen Iranian-backed terror threaten the U.S. and our interests abroad, even launch attacks on European soil like the 2012 bombing in Burgas, Bulgaria. So Hezbollah continues to actively fund raise across Europe which is why many of us have worked hard to encourage the EU to designate Hezbollah in its entirety a terrorist organization.

As we sit here today with 20 years of the war on terror behind us, and as we chart a new path of cooperation forward on counterterrorism in Afghanistan, it is time to reassess our counterterrorism strategy and our global partnerships. Our alliances are what keep us strong in the great power competition with China and Russia. We have some rebuilding to do after the past several years, and I am aware that many of our transatlantic partners need to see actionable assurances from the United States that we

remain committed to these vital partnerships. That is why President Biden continues to reaffirm the importance of alliances as he did just this week at the U.N. General Assembly.

Today we will examine the mechanisms and frameworks in place for the U.S. and our European partners to jointly counter violent extremism. We will also look at what has worked and what hasn't worked and how we can adjust our approaches for the types of threats that we currently face. I am grateful to the witnesses for appearing today and sharing their expertise.

I thank Chair Keating again, and I look forward to a productive discussion and continuing to affirm our commitment to the transatlantic partnership.

With that, Chairman Keating has introduced the witnesses, so I will now recognize the witnesses for 5 minutes each. Without objection, your prepared written statement will be made part of the record.

Mr. Onidi, you are now recognized for your comments.

**STATEMENT OF OLIVIER ONIDI, DEPUTY DIRECTOR-GENERAL,
DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR MIGRATION AND HOME AFFAIRS,
EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

Mr. ONIDI. Thank you. Thank you very much, Chair, for this invitation. Thank you also to the ranking members and all honorable members, actually, of both of your subcommittees. It is a great pleasure and honor to be with you in a position to testify on the current, actually, efforts on both sides of the Atlantic to continue in the quest of reinforcing the fight against terrorism.

The subject is important. September 11, you said it, sent shock waves, really, as to the dimension terrorism had taken. But we have seen throughout years, 20 years now, how close both the United States and the European Union and its member States have actually come in setting in place the response to fight global terrorism. We have joined forces abroad to defeat international terrorism organizations, and we should continue doing this with a renewed commitment of the United States to remain active in the main parts at risk. For example, is a very important testimony to this engagement to continue of having our military forces engaged abroad for that cause.

We have learned also progressively to set up policy responses that were mutually reinforcing. When we talk about the fight against terrorism financing, there is no better example than the terrorist financial tracking program that has been instrumental in cutting the finance resources to organized terrorism groupings.

Advance passenger information, passenger name records have also been tools which we haven't only developed in our own jurisdiction but which we are also developing across the world in different countries. Information systems being used by our border guards and also the information that is actively being pushed in those systems is another, I guess, example of how much we have done together.

We have brought our agencies, our operational entities to actively work together. There is no better example than Europol being the hub in Europe of cross border, transatlantic cooperation with all relevant agencies being represented and being closely asso-

ciated to the work of Europol on our side in terms of facilitating the exchange of information, providing support to investigations, but also then looking at prosecution and the judiciary angle of the cases.

How to best understand what actually leads an individual to commit a terrorist act, sir, prevents this to happen. Also, we rehabilitate individuals. This has become the prime focus of our joint work because we have realized that most of the attacks these days actually committed on our soil by homegrown domestic residents of our countries, and we have done a lot of progress in actually helping out in anticipation of such acts. And I would be very happy to discuss in more details the type of cooperations we set up on that.

And then, finally, the last point I wanted to highlight in this introduction, the online world, which has also been a recognition that most of the incitement, the recruitment of individuals led to commit terrorist attacks is actually happening online. In every attack over the last years in Europe, there is an important factor of online radicalization.

This is where we have seen us shouldering our efforts toward the internet world, pushing through the companies the obligations to do more in order to identify and suppress terrorism incitement material and also helping us in identifying those groupings which were actually very active online.

Afghanistan, you said it, is another reminder of how important it is to continue this fight together and certainly not lower our guards in this field.

Thank you very much for your attention.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Onidi follows:]

Testimony Deputy Director General Migration and Home Affairs, European Commission Counter Terrorism Coordinator, Olivier Onidi

House of Representatives, Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber and Subcommittee on Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism

Speaking points

[Thank the chair for the invitation].

There is no doubt that the events of September 11 were the driving force behind the transatlantic counterterrorism partnership over the past two decades. Throughout this period, it became increasingly clear that our security is collective in nature, and this intimacy of mission has reinforced our resolve in fighting violent extremism. Common values formed the bedrock of this relationship, while differences in privacy laws, freedom of speech protections, and other legal frameworks have spurred U.S. and European officials to think critically and creatively about new ways to address problems.

The Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS allowed to coordinate our actions in Syria and Iraq which enabled the territorial defeat of Da'esh. Today, transatlantic partners continue to operate against emerging threats in Afghanistan and the Sahel.

Our actions against terrorism include financial support and capacity building in key regions and countries (for example in Western Balkans or in the region of Sahel). It is important that we continue efforts to coordinate with the U.S and with other major donors, in order to maximise the effectiveness of our respective programs.

The European Union's counterterrorism policy is based on two main documents: (1) the Security Union Strategy published in July 2020, and (2) the EU CT Agenda published 5 months later, aiming at anticipating, preventing, protecting and responding to terrorist threats or acts. Both these documents highlight that cooperation with trusted partner countries is key to ensure the EU's internal security, and the US has always been a privileged partner.

Fora like the EU-US JHA Ministerial and the EU-US Senior Officials Meeting provide occasions for regular exchange and, luckily, we could now start again with physical meetings. Notably the recent visit of Commissioner Johansson

end of August/beginning of September saw an open exchange with US Secretary for Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas, with the Attorney General Merrick Garland and with other key interlocutors in the US administration on a wide range of topics from Afghanistan to cybersecurity, violent extremism and many others. This was encouraging and underlined the importance of a strong transatlantic cooperation on counterterrorism, given the growing global threats.

Looking at the latter, and notably the dramatic situation in Afghanistan, it seems clear that we need to enhance transatlantic cooperation on counterterrorism. We will need to closely work together to mitigate the spill over effects, in order to achieve:

- Enhanced security checks on persons evacuated from Afghanistan, or that will arrive at our external borders – to prevent infiltrations;
- Better strategic intelligence/foresight – to avoid AFGH becomes again a safe haven for terrorist organisations;
- Close monitoring & countering of propaganda and mobilisation of the Jihadi eco-system;
- An effective tackling of organised crime in AFGH/region – to reduce sources for terrorist financing.

Despite the setback in Afghanistan, we think it is fair to say that we are much better prepared today than 20 years ago. This is primarily thanks to the many areas in which we substantially developed our cooperation in the course of the last years and on which we can further build to anticipate and face new threats stemming from recent developments in Afghanistan. By way of illustration, let me give you some examples of areas where we managed to establish a longstanding cooperation between our two sides:

1. Exchange of information and operational cooperation:

The exchange of data on Foreign Terrorist Fighters between FBI and Europol is a brilliant example of this cooperation. The information provided (list of 2700 identities) was inserted into the Schengen Information System by our Member States, which is valuably supporting – in EU but also US interest – checks performed at the EU external borders. The situation in Afghanistan and related security threats highlight the importance to continue, and possibly expand, this co-operation. We think that this would make sense, in

particular, for enhanced EU security screenings of persons evacuated, resettled or otherwise arriving from Afghanistan.

Moreover, we would consider it also highly desirable if, in specific cases, EU Member States could get the possibility to carry out checks in relevant US databases and information systems. We see many advantages in more targeted US information becoming available to all our Member States, possibly through Europol. It goes without saying that the Commission services stand ready to discuss at technical level all the details with their US counterparts.

2. Battlefield information

Related to this is the cooperation on the exchange of battlefield information. Access to information collected on the ground is of great value and importance for preventing infiltrations and ensure effective prosecution of terrorism cases in courts.

3. Countering the financing of terrorism

The 2010 EU-US Terrorism financing tracking Program (TFTP) agreement is another success story of our cooperation. The Commission considers the TFTP to be a highly efficient instrument to provide timely, accurate and reliable information about financial transactions associated with persons suspected of terrorism. It is very effective to “follow the money” to identify and track terrorists and their support networks worldwide. Over the years there have been a series of cases in which the information provided under the Agreement (“leads”) has been instrumental in bringing forward specific investigations relating to terrorist attacks on EU soil

4. Aviation security

The EU and the US have worked closely in addressing threats to aviation security over the last decades, and jointly shaped the global agenda and standards, notably at ICAO.

5. home-made explosive threats

The longstanding regular EU-US Explosive Expert Seminars remain a key tool for launching, discussing, developing many initiatives, notably on explosives, dangerous chemicals, drones or sniffing dogs.

6. Cybersecurity and Critical Infrastructure

Fruitful cooperation exist also with CISA, as demonstrated by the EU-US-Canada meeting on critical infrastructure resilience in June, where DG HOME exchanged with US partners on the latest trends, including the COVID-19 pandemic and best practices. Common challenges exist notably in cross-border cases, with regard to cyber risks, effective public-private partnerships, security risks relating to drones in urban environments, and the protection of public spaces.

7. Passenger Name Records (PNR)

Given the global nature of security threats, the need for law enforcement and criminal justice community to exchange relevant information is undeniable. Recall the value of the existing EU-U.S. PNR agreement for the detection and investigation of organised criminal groups, including terrorist groups. Plea for U.S. openness to discuss with the Commission services how to concretely address the recommendations of the Joint Evaluations in a pragmatic manner and improve the scope of cooperation on the exchange and use of PNR data and the results of their processing

8. Prevention work

- On Afghanistan:

To enable informed prevention and strategic communication activities in EU Member States we need to closely monitor, with the help of Europol, the islamist extremist propaganda that may be coming from Afghanistan as well as radicalising discourses inspired by the Taliban success in other countries. Reciprocal right-wing and left-wing extremist narratives should not escape our radar either.

- On Violent Right Wing Extremism

We have increased our exchanges with the U.S. on the common challenge related to racially and ethnically motivated violent extremism (or violent right-wing extremism as we refer to it in Europe).

2019 was a pivotal year. After a wave of attacks worldwide, including Halle, Hanau, El Paso, Christchurch, Poway, and others, it became evident that the activities of violent right-wing extremists transcend borders and that these groups and individuals hold international links.

Currently it is not limited to the cultural and historical pasts of countries, but more to ideas and narratives, mostly spread online, that are conspiratory in nature and which aim at mobilising global audiences.

Since the end of last year we are regularly exchanging on this topic at experts levels: policymakers and practitioners.

- On terrorist content online:

In addition to voluntary approaches, the European Union has regulated in order to address the dissemination of terrorist content online, with appropriate safeguards in place to protect fundamental rights. The U.S. takes a different approach based on voluntary collaboration with platforms. It is important that we continue our cooperation on this topic in global for a such as the GIFTC and the Christchurch Call for action.

The Regulation EU (EU) 2021/784 (Terrorist Content online Regulation) responds to the need to tackle online content disseminated by terrorists in order to spread their message, to radicalise and recruit followers, and to facilitate and direct terrorist activity. Terrorist attacks perpetrated recently on EU soil, such as the attacks in France in October 2020, are strong reminders of how terrorist content online plays a role in the planning and carrying out of terrorist attacks.

[Closing formula]

* * *

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Onidi.

Ms. Ramalingam, you are now recognized for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF VIDHYA RAMALINGAM, FOUNDER & CEO,
MOONSHOT**

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you. Chair Keating, Chair Deutch, Ranking Member Fitzpatrick, Ranking Member Wilson, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate your leadership to ensure better international cooperation on countering global violent extremism.

Throughout my career, I have worked to design and deliver terrorism prevention and deradicalization models globally. 10 years ago when a white supremacist terrorist murdered 77 people in Norway, I led the EU's first intergovernmental initiative on white nationalist terrorism and extremism.

I worked with hundreds of policymakers, practitioners, social workers, and former extremists across ten EU countries to gather evidence and design policy and programs on what worked in prevention of this form of terrorism.

Today, I have taken this fight online as founder of Moonshot, an organization working with U.S. and European governments to build online prevention mechanisms fit for the 21st century. Our work has been delivered with partners such as the U.S. Department of State across administrations and the Global Coalition Against Daesh with which we worked across over 80 coalition partners on online efforts to degrade terrorist recruitment.

The last 20 years have seen considerable investment across Europe in terrorism prevention models, but what actually works? Based on my research and what research shows, the following components of various European prevention models have proven to be effective: One. They involve behavioral health methods. There is a vast evidence base demonstrating its efficacy, particularly counseling, which helps to adequately address underlying drivers and vulnerabilities and can facilitate referrals to other services. This has become the cornerstone of most European programs.

2. They are multi-disciplinary and involve multi-agency systems which can achieve better case management, drawing on expertise and preexisting capabilities across social services, education, healthcare systems, and law enforcement.

3. They are locally established and run with substantive involvement from communities where they are deployed.

4. They need not be ideology focused but, rather, span the ideological spectrum. Licensed practitioners, including psychologists, counselors, social workers, and others involved in these programs do require training to engage ideology when it arises, but ideology does not need to be addressed first and foremost.

In fact, evidence shows sometimes this is counterproductive. Many longstanding European prevention programs engage individuals across the ideological spectrum at risk of Salafi Jihadism, neo-Nazism, violent end cells, and potential mass shooters alike.

5. They offer off ramps for those looking to leave violent extremism. Off ramping and exit programs such as those in Sweden, Finland, and Germany demonstrate high case loads and low recidi-

vism rates and have served as the model for life after hate here in the United States.

And, finally, these programs tend to be more effective and credible when they are independent of government but have stable government funding. Accountability is critical, but a bit of independence gives programs, especially exit programs, greater authority with those who are looking to leave violent extremism.

But perhaps the greatest challenge for these efforts is how to bring these prevention models into the 21st century. Social media creates new opportunities for perpetrators to reach vulnerable audiences and has supercharged the spread of violent extremist content. In 2021, every terrorism prevention model needs a robust digital component. Moonshot has spent 6 years working with governments to design and implement digital complements to offline terrorism prevention infrastructures. This must be done safely, ethically, and responsibly.

First, the entire suite of prevention services needs to be adopted for online delivery, including risk assessment frameworks and counseling services. Second, we need to adequately signpost terrorism prevention services such as hotlines, counseling, and exit offers online. Third, online prevention frameworks must be designed with user privacy at its heart.

Evidence shows us that this works. In Moonshot's recent studies, audiences at risk of Jihadism were 47 percent more likely than the general public to take up offers of psychosocial support services online. Neo-Nazis were 48 percent more likely.

And this year alone, Moonshot has channeled over 100 individuals at risk of violent extremism across the United States into text messaging counseling sessions via online engagement.

We need to acknowledge that the tech companies are not doing enough in this fight. As we continue to hold these companies to account, we do have an obligation to adopt our terrorism prevention infrastructures to this new reality. We must both learn from the past and look to the future in our fight against global terrorism. Thank you for your time today. I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Ramalingam follows:]



*Testimony of Vidhya Ramalingam
Founder, Moonshot
before the
Europe, Energy, Environment and Cyber Subcommittee and
The Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee*

**Hearing on
“Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism”
September 23, 2021**

Chair Keating, Ranking Member Fitzpatrick, members of the Subcommittees: Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today. I appreciate your leadership to ensure better international cooperation on countering global violent extremism.

My name is Vidhya Ramalingam, and throughout my career, I have worked to design and deliver terrorism prevention and de-radicalization models globally. Ten years ago, when a white supremacist terrorist murdered 77 people in Norway, I led the EU's first inter-governmental initiative on white nationalist terrorism and extremism.

I worked with hundreds of policy makers, practitioners, social workers, and former extremists across 10 EU countries to gather evidence and design policy and programs on what worked in prevention of this form of terrorism.¹

Today, I've taken this fight online as Founder of Moonshot, an organization working with US and European governments to build online prevention mechanisms fit for the 21st century. Our work has been delivered with partners such as the U.S. Department of State, across administrations, and the Global Coalition Against Daesh, with which we worked across over 80 Coalition partners on online efforts to degrade terrorist recruitment efforts.²

The last 20 years has seen considerable investment across Europe in terrorism prevention models. For the past decade the EU's Radicalisation Awareness Network (RAN) has connected frontline practitioners from across Europe to exchange knowledge, first-hand experiences and approaches to preventing and countering violent extremism in all its forms. But what actually works?

¹ https://www.isdglobal.org/ISD_New_Approach_Far_Right_Report.pdf

² <https://theglobalcoalition.org/en/>

Based on my experience and what the research shows, the following components of various European prevention models have proven to be effective.

1. **They involve behavioral health methods.** There is a vast evidence base demonstrating their efficacy - particularly counseling - which helps to adequately address underlying vulnerabilities and drivers, and can lead to referrals to other social services.³ This has become the cornerstone of most European programs.⁴ **They are also built on preexisting social services** and draw on adjacent fields such as gang prevention work,⁵ rather than developed as stand-alone terrorism prevention programming, which is more sustainable and cost-effective.
2. **They involve multi-agency systems** which can achieve better case management drawing on expertise across social services, education and healthcare systems, and law enforcement.⁶
3. **They are locally established** and run with substantive involvement from communities where they're deployed.⁷
4. **They need not be ideology-focused but rather span the ideological spectrum.** Licensed practitioners, including psychologists, counselors, social workers and others involved in these programs require training to engage ideology when it arises, but ideology does not need to be addressed first and foremost. In fact, evidence shows this is sometimes counter-productive.⁸ Many long-standing European prevention programs engage individuals at-risk of Salafi Jihadism, neo-Nazism, violent incels, and potential mass shooters alike.
5. **They offer off ramps** for those looking to leave violent extremism. Offramping and exit programs, such as those in Sweden, Finland and Germany demonstrate high caseloads and low recidivism rates,⁹ and have served as the model for Life After Hate in the United States.

And finally, these programs tend to be more effective and credible when they are:

6. **Independent of government** but have stable government funding. Accountability is critical, but a bit of independence gives programs, especially exit programs, greater authority with those looking to leave violent extremism.¹⁰

³ https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_LessonsLearnedfromMentalHealthAndEducation_FullReport_Oct2015.pdf

⁴ Koehler, D. (2016). Understanding Deradicalization: Methods, Tools and Programs for Countering Violent Extremism. Routledge.

⁵ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2020-09/ran_exit_adjacent_fields_gangs_11-12_09_2018_en.pdf

⁶ https://www.gu.se/sites/default/files/2020-03/1764750_korrekt-versionmixing-logics_digital_korrekt.pdf

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/home-affairs/system/files/2021-06/ran_activities_local_coordination_and_local_approach_to_p-cve_june_2021_en.pdf

⁸ https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2020-07/20200729-pw_163-violent_extremist_disengagement_and_reconciliation_a_peacebuilding_approach-pw.pdf

⁹ Hall, N., Corb, A., Giannasi, P., & Grieve, J. (Eds.) (2014). The Routledge international handbook on hate crime.

Routledge, Aggredi <https://rikoksentoriunta.fi/en/aggredi-programme>; Exit Germany

https://www.exit-deutschland.de/Datei-Download/29/Broschuere-EXIT-Engl_PDFDS_11_4.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.unodc.org/documents/brussels/News/Communities_First_December_2016.pdf

Perhaps the greatest challenge for the international community today is how to bring these prevention models into the 21st century. Social media has created new opportunities for perpetrators to reach vulnerable audiences, and has supercharged the spread of violent extremist content. Many of the prevention models set up over the past 20 years struggle to keep up.

In 2021, every terrorism prevention model needs a robust digital component. Moonshot has spent six years working with governments to design and implement digital components to offline terrorism prevention infrastructures. This must be done safely, ethically, and responsibly.

First, the entire suite of prevention services needs to be adapted for online delivery, including risk assessment frameworks and counselling services. We need to build the digital literacy and capacity of existing prevention practitioners. Second, we need to adequately signpost terrorism prevention services - such as hotlines, counselling, and Exit offers - online. Third, online prevention frameworks must be designed with user privacy at its heart.

Evidence shows us that this works. In Moonshot's recent studies, audiences at risk of jihadism were 47% more likely than the general public to take up offers of psychosocial support services online. Neo-Nazis were 48% more likely.¹¹ This year alone, Moonshot has channeled over 100 individuals at-risk of violent extremism across the United States into text-message counselling sessions via online engagement.

We need to acknowledge that the tech companies are not doing enough in this fight. As we continue to hold these companies to account, we have an obligation to adapt our terrorism prevention infrastructures to this new reality. We must both learn from the past and look to the future in our fight against global terrorism.

Thank you for your time today, I look forward to your questions.

¹¹ <https://moonshotteam.com/mental-health-violent-extremism/>;
<https://moonshotteam.com/indonesia-social-grievances-violent-extremism/>

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Ms. Ramalingam.

The chair recognizes Mr. Raffaello Pantucci for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF RAFFAELLO PANTUCCI, SENIOR ASSOCIATE
FELLOW, ROYAL UNITED SERVICES INSTITUTE (RUSI)**

Mr. PANTUCCI. Thank you very much. Chairs Keating and Deutch, Ranking Member Fitzpatrick and Wilson, distinguished committee members, and fellow speakers, thank you for the invitation to come and speak to you today.

A lot of what I am going to talk about has been touched on already by some of the earlier speakers, and I am conscious that this is a space where there is a lot of thinking and work going on.

And I recognize I will repeat some points, but what I want to do is I want to talk a little bit about two very specific parts of the current terrorist threat that is faced by the transatlantic alliance.

Counterterrorism, of course remains a major threat and in many ways has become infinitely more complicated than it was 2 decades ago. There is a wide range of threats out there, and to cover them all in the time available would be an exercise in futility.

So I will focus on two slightly disparate areas that I think merit particular priority attention at the moment, lone actor terrorism and the fallout from Afghanistan, both issues that I think we have already had speakers talking about already.

The lone actor threat is repeatedly identified by senior security officials in both Europe and North America as the biggest and most complicated problem that they currently face. The most recent annual Europol report highlighted these becoming the most frequent and regular attacks that Europe was facing, and they noted they were becoming ever harder to detect.

This is all not to say that terrorist groups do not have the desire and ambition to launch large scale terrorist plots, but it is a testament to our successful security capabilities that we have been able in essentially such a difficult environment for them to try to launch the attacks that the only ones that we are actually seeing able to get through are these lone actor ones. But that does also emphasize why this is an area that we really need to focus more attention on in trying to respond.

And, second, Afghanistan I want to highlight in particular as that particular threat has, of course, come to our attention once again. It is not particularly a new problem or threat, but it has, of course, been brought into sharper focus due to recent events, and it has shifted the dial on the particular problem and requires us to think a little bit more carefully about how to manage some of the consequences and problems that might emanate from it.

And I want to offer three specific areas for potential cooperation going forward on these two broad areas of terrorism.

To start with the lone actor side of the threat, as has been already discussed, the lone actor threat really is becoming the sharp end of the threat picture that we see, but it is becoming increasingly confusing, and we see that the ideologies that individuals who are committing lone actor terrorist attacks are becoming increasingly idiosyncratic. They are becoming an odd mix of left, right Islamists, all getting muddled up into individual cases. And, in-

creasingly, these ideologies are getting muddled back and forth across the Atlantic, generated sometimes in our very own communities in the United States or in Europe, in part, an extension of the very polarized political conversation that we increasingly see in our respective countries.

This makes them very difficult to manage because when you look at some of these threats and the ideologies that are supporting them, you are looking at things that are sitting on the edge of the mainstream political discourse which makes it very hard to try to craft a specific response to crack down on these and to get legislation that will deal with this effectively, the problem being, of course, that we have different perspectives on where the law should lie with particular ideologies.

But I think greater coordination is clearly needed and a greater conversation to try and understand where we both see these threats lie and understanding how different, you know, hyper ideologies in one—in Europe or North America will have a very direct impact on the threat picture on the other side, and particularly on the lone actor side of the threat.

The second one is on the tactical side. A lot of this problem is happening online, as has been highlighted by previous speakers. And, clearly, the United States has a far superior capability in many ways of conducting preventive actions and very aggressive counterterrorism activity in the online space.

Greater coordination and cooperation within the space clearly is going to be essential, but ensuring that these tools are being used in a proportionate amount, and ensuring, as the previous speaker mentioned, the social media companies are being particularly focused on in trying to ensure that they are addressing their side of the equation.

And then, finally, on the preventive side. As was also already highlighted, on the preventive side of the coin, you are looking at an issue which is becoming very individualized, and you are looking at trying to respond to lone actor threats that are being dealt with by a wide range of different actors from social services through to hard security actors.

Ensuring that these people are communicating and sharing best practices across the Atlantic I think will be critical because I think it is no longer going to be the case that a single answer to this problem exists. It never really did anyway, but I think that is becoming even more realistic. So learning from each other's experience within the space will be increasingly critical.

To look very briefly at Afghanistan, conscious that I am coming up against time, I want to talk about three specific aspects. First, we are talking about this an awful lot within the context of how the threats from Afghanistan may come home, and yet, the real problems are more likely happening in Afghanistan's neighborhoods.

Understanding how the transatlantic alliance can manage the threats that are most likely to spawn, most likely to appear in Afghanistan or in Pakistan or in central Asia is, I think, where we should be really focusing our attention in the short to medium term.

Second, geopolitics. The transatlantic alliance was clearly pulled by the issues that we saw, but I think we need to be careful not to overstate this. And I think, instead, we need to start to think about focusing where it is that actually, the United States and European allies can focus their attention.

The U.K., for example, has a deep experience in Pakistan, focusing attention there for the U.K. Or in central Asia, Germany has a very strong relationship with Uzbekistan. France has a particular relationship with Tajikistan. Establishing these new sort of alliances to deal with the over the horizon threats that we may see emanating from Afghanistan I think will be a critical thing to focus on going forwards.

And then absolutely finally, I think we really need to try to find ways of extricating Afghanistan from the great power conflict lens that it is increasingly being seen within. In focusing on Afghanistan through this lens, we are going to do ourselves a disservice and potentially find stymied our ability to respond to the very real potential terrorist threats that are likely to emerge, and I will cede the floor there.

Thank you very much, and I look forward to your comments and questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Pantucci follows:]

Raffaello Pantucci

Senior Associate Fellow, Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies
(RUSI), UK

Joint Committee Hearing of House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the
Environment and Cyber & House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East, North
Africa, and Global Counterterrorism

Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism

September 21, 2021

The terrorist threat picture faced by Europe and North America is one that has only become more complicated as time has gone on. While the overall numbers of casualties may have gone down, the variety of ideologies, places of origin and nature of plots has only become more complicated in the past two decades. At the same time, cooperation between North America and Europe in countering these threats has only become tighter. To provide a survey of the entire picture in the time available would be an exercise in futility, and as a consequence, I am going to focus on two principal threat areas that face the Transatlantic Alliance in the short term. First is the menace of lone actor terrorism which is repeatedly spoken of as the priority menace on both sides of the Atlantic (and further afield), and second the fall-out from events in Afghanistan. These remarks will be concise given space restrictions, but will hopefully provide some broader food for thought.

Lone Actor Terrorism

Since its early expressions in the late 2000s (though some would trace it back even further), lone actor terrorism as a methodology has become the principal source of terrorist attacks in Europe and North America. Whilst there can be no doubt that sophisticated terrorist networks are still keen to launch large-scale plots, it has become increasingly difficult for them to penetrate western security barriers. This is a clear source of success for the Transatlantic Alliance that has been able to construct a set of security perimeters that regularly frustrate attempts by terrorist groups to successfully attack on a larger-scale. But it has also exposed the reality that lone actor plots are exceptionally hard to detect and prevent.

The reasons for this difficulty are multi-faceted. The most obvious aspect is the fact that such attacks involve low technology weapons that are often fashioned from tools from every day life, with short flash-to-bang periods, and are often undertaken by highly volatile individuals who are difficult to legally detain pre-attack. The growing dominance of knives and vehicles in terrorist attack planning makes it difficult for security agencies to use traditional tripwires to try to prevent such incidents, and in the United States the easy availability of high grade firearms amplifies the effect of such attacks. Europe is to some degree protected from this particular aspect of the threat, given the lower availability (though this is not always the case as exemplified by attackers in Hanau or Oslo, or even further afield, Christchurch).

At the same time, terrorist ideologies have increasingly pushed their adherents towards the lone actor attack methodology. Al Qaeda, ISIS and parts of the extreme right wing (XRW) have all advanced the lone actor methodology of attack through their publications and narratives. Likely in part realizing the complexity of successfully launching large-scale plots and recognizing the potential impact a successful lone actor attack can have, terrorist groups have sought to make it easier for individuals to launch attacks in support of their ideology. ISIS in particular fashioned a very simple narrative for people to launch incidents that could be associated with their ideology, thereby providing a frame which many different individuals could use to add meaning to acts of violence that they might otherwise have committed anyway out of their own personal rage.

But the problem with these ideas is that they have a habit of drifting beyond your intended audience. They become common currency which is widely accepted and discussed, creating an easy template that anybody (or any group) can adopt. It is noticeable for example the degree to which right wing groups have taken on similar narratives, seeking to persuade their own followers to consider similar attack methodologies to those being advanced by their putative ideological adversaries in ISIS. While it is clear that this typology is not new to the extreme right – the idea of lone wolf terrorism is something that has long been embedded in extreme right thinking – the success of it in recent years for groups like ISIS or al Qaeda has awakened the effectiveness of its use to a wider audience.

And even more problematically than this, the methodology is now entirely accessible even to an audience whose ideological frame is absent or confused. In recent years, the UK's Home Office has started to note an increase in cases of individuals who appear to have an ideological framing which is defined as "mixed, unstable or unclear." This group have a habit of being radicalised in the classical sense, but when investigators dig into their ideological leanings, they find a confused collection of sometimes directly contradictory ideas. These highly idiosyncratic ideologies are clearly coherent in the individual's mind, but nowhere else. Some have identified that some school shooters are similar in their outlooks, drafting manifestos prior to their attacks. Yet the attack methodology they all lean towards is a simple one, using weapons that are easily accessible and clearly aping the approach that has been popularized by ISIS or the extreme right. They appear to be ISIS or XRW attacks and yet in reality are probably something different.

Even more complicated than the ideological aspect is the mental state of some of these individuals. Whilst one has to pay attention to not entirely remove agency from the culprit, it is clear that a growing volume of offenders are people with histories of mental health disorder or neuropsychological disorders. This means you have a growing cohort of lone actor attacks that are being conducted by individuals who appear to have a confused ideological leaning, and whose mental faculties are not entirely competent. While there is a larger discussion to be had about the degree to which we should even be considering these individuals as part of the terrorism cohort (operating on the assumption that perpetrators defined as terrorists should at least have a clear political motivation inspiring them, something entirely confused in this group), from a security agency perspective this poses a major problem. A successful lone actor in this mould will in the first instance be considered a terrorist actor, leading to all of the societal tensions and complications that generates. And for first response authorities

and those being injured or murdered in the attack, there is little distinction to them in a lone actor that is linked to ISIS to one that is instead inspired by a confusing mess of ideas.

But this is where the larger transatlantic alliance might want to start to explore greater cooperation and consideration. This is a problem we have seen in Europe just as much as in North America (or even further afield in alliance countries like New Zealand or Singapore). Cooperation in this space is however highly complicated as ultimately the battle is one which is not going to be successfully fought on battlefields.

In cooperative terms, three key areas identify themselves as places to focus attention going forwards. These build on years of effective counter-terrorism cooperation across the Atlantic, and reflect the complicated nature of the lone actor threat in particular.

First is on the ideological side. There is a growing interweaving of ideas and groups across the Atlantic (and more widely) online. This spread has meant that ideologies can be spawned in the United States which resonate widely across the world. In part these ideologies are able to grow in countries where rules around free speech are interpreted with a wider latitude than in others. This is not a new problem, but when looking at the extreme right and propagators of some new ideologies like QAnon, it is a problem which is increasingly found as emanating from part of the Transatlantic Alliance. This requires greater coordination to both ensure rapid takedown (something to be done in conjunction with social media companies in particular) as well as efforts to detain and prevent ideologues advancing such ideas wherever they might be. Key to this is also recognition that while an individual may not be crossing a legal boundary in the jurisdiction where they are based, they may be pushing others to cross it in foreign lands. Greater coordination in managing this, and in closing down these online networks and communities would in part help stem the problem.

Second is on the tactical side. It is clear that the United States has an online capability that is vastly superior to most European powers. While the United Kingdom, France and Germany have grown their own capabilities, they are still very dependent on the US. Greater coordination should be undertaken amongst a wider community of security agencies across the Atlantic to try to counter lone actor plots. While it is true that most lone actors operate alone, there is a growing body of evidence showing that they do in fact communicate or tell others about their attacks or plans pre-incident. Much of this communication happens online, sometimes in very public forums. This suggests a point of interdiction that Transatlantic partners should work more closely on detecting and preventing.

Third is on the preventative side – one of the key problems with lone actor terrorism as a methodology is its easy adoption. This means the range of individuals who are perpetrating such attacks is becoming ever wider, with individuals deciding to use it as a method of expression with little sense of connection to the ideology that initially spawned it as a tactic. The key point here is the wide ranging nature of profiles of those involved, and the growing instances of neuropsychological or mental health issues amongst this cohort. This generates a new form of preventative response and post-arrest management. While the *sui generis* nature of each case means lessons are not always easily translatable, the cumulative effect of the volume of cases seen around the world is likely to generate some new ideas and approaches which others would benefit from learning from. Creating a more regular exchange

of ideas across the Atlantic about how to manage these cases in prisons, in society or elsewhere would likely generate some successful new approaches to deal with this threat.

Afghanistan

Another major terrorist issue which has raised its head for the Transatlantic Alliance in recent months is the change in government in Afghanistan, where the collapse of the Islamic Republic has led to the rise of an Islamic Emirate controlled by the Taliban. While it remains unclear the degree to which the Taliban will be able to maintain control in the longer-term, it does seem they are going to be able to hold power for the short to medium term. Given their close connections to al Qaeda, and previous support for groups and networks which have generated terrorist plots in the west and elsewhere, this is clearly a source of concern to the Transatlantic Alliance. But what is the exact nature of this threat, and what tensions has this generated in the broader alliance framework which need to be addressed.

In terms of responding to the potential threat, the first key element to focus on is that few assessments have pointed to the change in government in Afghanistan generating an immediate or medium term threat to the west. While it is impossible to predict how things will play out in the longer-term, for the time being it seems unlikely that al Qaeda will be able to rebuild its capabilities to launch large-scale terrorist attacks against western interests for at least the next two years (and possibly even further in the future). The group is a vastly reduced form of its former self, and has for the past few years appeared to focus more on regional conflicts that striking at far enemies in the west. This likely creates problems in other parts of the globe where al Qaeda linked or inspired groups exist, but not as much in the west.

A far larger and immediate threat is likely present in Pakistan, and to a lesser degree in Central Asia. India also faces the potential for threats, as do China, Russia and Iran. The key here, however, is that when looking at how threats from Afghanistan might emerge, it is imperative that the west move away from focusing single-mindedly on how problems might directly come home. The last major plot reported publicly as having links to Afghanistan, was a group of Tajiks arrested in April 2020 in Germany. Yet the extent of their connection to Afghanistan was a remote one through mobile phone applications. Far more immediate is the danger of groups starting to use Afghanistan as a base to destabilize Pakistan or even more inspiring groups in Pakistan to rise up against the government in Islamabad. A similar (though more remote) possibility presents itself in parts of Central Asia, as well as Iran, Russia and China – though all of them have more effective police apparatus that is likely able to contain threats.

The key for the Transatlantic Alliance is to focus on managing the spread of problems from Afghanistan into its neighbourhood rather than single-mindedly focusing on the not impossible, but unlikely, outcome that groups start to immediately launch attacks against the west.

The second major issue within this context is geopolitical. The withdrawal from Afghanistan by the United States was long telegraphed, but not heard in other capitals. This led to a chaotic withdrawal which raised concerns about American security guarantees. While these are likely overstated, they have highlighted once again the reality that Europe in particular has somewhat taken for granted American security support. The answer here is clearly for

Europe to increase its efforts, but these should be done in conjunction with American partners who remain key enablers in counter-terrorism operations around the globe. Finding a way of better cooperating in establishing over the horizon presence in South Asia in particular is going to be an area of key cooperation going forwards. European partners like the United Kingdom have strong relations in Pakistan in particular, while France and Germany have a deep footprint in parts of Central Asia. This provides a useful point of engagement for the Transatlantic Alliance going forwards.

Finally, both sides of the Atlantic should work to try to extricate the problem of countering terrorist groups in the region in particular (and more widely) from the larger great power conflict that is currently consuming the Transatlantic Alliance. In Afghanistan in particular, the insertion of great power conflict narratives creates a context to replicate the immensely damaging and counter-productive history of using proxy groups in Afghanistan to fight against each other. Focusing on the terrorist threats as problems that menace not only the western alliance, but also regional adversaries provides a way to actually deal with the threats rather than making them worse.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Pantucci. And now the chair recognizes Dr. Matthew Levitt for 5 minutes for your opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF DR. MATTHEW LEVITT, FROMER-WEXLER FELLOW, DIRECTOR, JEANETTE AND ELI REINHARD PROGRAM ON COUNTERTERRORISM AND INTELLIGENCE, THE WASHINGTON INSTITUTE FOR NEAR EAST POLICY

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you very much, Chairs and Ranking Members. It is a pleasure to be here. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I have to say, it is a real pleasure to appear alongside Vidhya, Raf, and Olivier, each of whom is a friend and an exceptional analyst.

Over the past 2 decades, the United States built a counterterrorism bureaucracy to manage, resource, and operationalize the Nation's response to the threat posed by Al Qaeda in particular and terrorism more broadly. This counterterrorism enterprise has been remarkably successful from a tactical perspective, foiling attacks and disrupting terrorist networks. Terrorists today are far less likely to be able to carry out a spectacular attack like 9/11.

But from a strategic vantage point, our 20-year struggle against terrorism has been far less successful. Many more people today are radicalized to violent extremism than in 2001, representing a more ideologically diversified and globally dispersed terrorist threat. Consider the 2 decades after 9/11, the U.S. Government's data base of known or suspected terrorists has grown by almost a factor of 20. Turning the corner on this larger problem set, getting ahead of the radicalization curve demands two interrelated changes to the now 2-decade old U.S. approach to countering terrorism.

First, we must invest in our own and our allies' civilian counterterrorism capabilities and ways that to date we have only done in the realm of kinetic military counterterrorism tool sets. This should involve a particular focus and investment in extremism prevention which, at its core, is not a mission for counterterrorism agencies but is rather the product of good governance, of rule of law, equitable and well-functioning societies, and healthy communities.

To get ahead of the terrorism problem will require seeing clinical social workers and local government as frontline responders to address violent extremism. Violent extremism is a global problem that has at its core very local drivers which require local responses. Therefore, as underscored in the 2020 strategy to prevent conflict and promote stability, U.S. interagency plans submitted to Congress as required under the Global Fragility Act of 2019, military force should be only one and an increasingly small part of the solution.

While generating support for preventive or crisis management efforts can be difficult, such initiatives are especially important to break the cycle of fragility and should be prioritized in areas where today's strategic investment can mitigate tomorrow's overwhelming crisis. Small amounts of financial support today can mean significant and meaningful security and justice sector reform, enhanced provision of essential services, reduce corruption, enfranchise disengaged sectors of society such as women, children, and minorities and make a difference.

Second, we must recognize that we cannot do everything on our own, nor should we be expected to shoulder the bulk of the cost in blood or in treasure for countering violent extremism around the world on our own. As the Biden administration's interim national security strategic guidance States, recent events show all too clearly that many of the biggest threats we face respect no borders or walls and must be met with collective action.

While critical, this will be no easy lift. U.S. counterterrorism agencies have developed very close working relationships with their counterparts for broadening U.S. efforts to work by, with, and through allies and local partners around the world on military missions and even on diplomatic missions will be easier said than done given America's recent track record of abandoning allies and local partners on short notice.

More broadly, convincing partner Nations to form burden sharing alliances with the United States to address threats closer to their borders than ours will be possible only once the United States has taken tangible action to restore its credibility as a reliable long-term partner and does more to tackle domestic violence extremism within its own borders.

At the end of the day, one European official explained to me all Europeans want a strong security partnership with the U.S. The question is whether this cooperation will be limited to the core missions, identifying and sharing information about terrorist networks, for example, or if we can move beyond this and together address the breeding grounds of terrorism and stabilization missions in places like Syria, Iraq, and the Sahel.

The key to making the latter development more likely may come down to the U.S. revisiting its traditional reluctance to share decisionmaking with its European partners. We need to be better listeners, and European partners revisiting their traditional discomfort over burden sharing.

Two final but important points. Ideological fluidity and blending of ideologies is what we see over and over here in the U.S. and in Europe. Typically, we see people wanting a sense of purpose, of community, of belonging. These are the key motivators to radicalization, not ideology. Ideology comes in later as the factor that then mobilizes people to action. This means that countering global violent extremism cannot focus on any one type of ideology. Islamist extremism still poses terrorist threats that we will have to take seriously, no doubt, but here in the United States, domestic violent extremists, white supremacists, anti-government, Neo-Nazis, and more present an even greater threat.

Second, there will always be areas of disagreement in the transatlantic relationship, and these will need to be navigated carefully. Some examples include Europe will have to do better in repatriation of foreign terrorist fighter nationals. The situations in camps like Al-Hawl in Syria is simply untenable.

America is going to have to come to terms with the dangers posed by the spread of hate speech, disinformation, and terrorist content online and find ways to address this challenge within our First Amendment limits. We are going to have to find ways to think about the threat level and the appropriate response to ex-

tremist actors such as Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraq, and other Shia militants. And to do that, we are going to need creative solutions.

So while, for example, pressing the European Union to designate all of Hezbollah as important and should continue, Congress could do a lot of good in this regard by working with national level parliaments in Europe, many of which are animated on this subject as well.

I thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Levitt follows:]



Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Violent Extremism

Dr. Matthew Levitt

Fromer-Wexler Fellow, Washington Institute for Near East Policy

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Chairs Keating and Deutch, Ranking Members Fitzpatrick and Wilson, and distinguished committee members, thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today to discuss transatlantic cooperation on countering global violent extremism.¹ Today's hearing is timely, coming on the heels of both the twentieth anniversary of the September 11 attacks and the recent U.S.-led coalition withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Over the past two decades, the United States has built a counterterrorism bureaucracy to manage, resource, and operationalize the nation's intelligence, law enforcement, and military response to the threat posed by al-Qaeda in particular and terrorism more broadly. This counterterrorism enterprise has been remarkably successful from a tactical perspective, foiling attacks and disrupting terrorist networks. Terrorists today are far less likely to be able to carry out a spectacular attack like 9/11. From a strategic vantage point, however, our twenty-year struggle against terrorism has been far less successful given that many more people today are radicalized to violent extremism than in 2001, representing a more ideologically diversified and globally dispersed terrorist threat. Consider that two decades after 9/11, the U.S. government's database of known or suspected terrorists "has grown by almost a factor of 20."²

Turning the corner on this larger problem set demands two interrelated changes to the now two-decade-old U.S. approach to countering terrorism:

First, we must invest in our own and our allies' *civilian* counterterrorism capabilities in ways that to date we have only done in the realm of kinetic, military counterterrorism tool sets. This should involve a particular focus and investment in extremism *prevention*, which at its core is not a mission for counterterrorism agencies

¹ This testimony draws heavily on the author's recent Washington Institute monograph, *Rethinking U.S. Efforts on Counterterrorism: Toward a Sustainable Plan Two Decades After 9/11*, Policy Note 99 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2021), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/rethinking-us-efforts-counterterrorism-toward-sustainable-plan-two-decades-after>.

² Russell Travers, "Counterterrorism in an Era of Competing Priorities: Ten Key Considerations," PolicyWatch 3216, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 13, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/counterterrorism-era-competing-priorities-ten-key-considerations>.

but is rather the product of good governance, rule of law, equitable and well-functioning societies, and healthy communities. To get ahead of the terrorism problem will require seeing clinical social workers and local government as frontline first responders to address violent extremism. Violent extremism is a global problem that has at its core very local drivers, which require local responses.

Second, we must recognize that we cannot do everything on our own, nor should we be expected to shoulder the bulk of the cost—in blood and treasure—for countering violent extremism around the world on our own. As the Biden administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance states, “Recent events show all too clearly that many of the biggest threats we face respect no borders or walls, and must be met with collective action,” including violent extremism and terrorism.³ While critical, this will be no easy lift.

U.S. counterterrorism agencies have developed extremely close working relationships with their foreign counterparts, especially when it comes to sharing information about plots in one another’s countries. But broadening U.S. efforts to work “by, with, and through” allies and local partners around the world on military counterterrorism missions will be easier said than done given America’s recent track record of abandoning local allies on short notice. More broadly, convincing partner nations to form burden-sharing alliances with the United States to address threats closer to their borders than our own will only be possible once the United States has taken tangible action to restore its credibility as a reliable long-term partner.

Rationalizing the U.S. Counterterrorism Posture

At a time of growing partisan polarization, the need to rationalize U.S. investment in counterterrorism represents a rare area of bipartisan agreement. According to one study, from fiscal year 2002 to 2017, the United States spent 16 percent of its entire discretionary budget on counterterrorism, totaling \$2.8 trillion or an average of \$186.6 billion annually over fifteen years.⁴ Great Power competition aside, the nation faces an array of critical challenges at home—from the public health and economic challenges caused by the Covid-19 pandemic to social and racial justice issues, infrastructure needs, climate change, and more—all of which demand significant investment at a time of shrinking budgets and a fast-growing federal deficit. Moreover, having appreciated the amount of time, money, and blood the United States is willing to expend to counter their inexpensive terrorist plots, U.S. adversaries believe that terrorism works.⁵

Leaders in both the Democratic and Republican Parties also stress the need to end “forever wars,” focus counterterrorism resources on protecting the U.S. homeland, and rely on foreign partners to take the lead—with U.S. support—on addressing terrorism in their neighborhoods. The terrorist threats facing the United States are more dispersed today than they were on September 11, 2001, but there is now general agreement on the need to adopt a more sustainable posture on the counterterrorism mission.

America’s post-9/11 counterterrorism enterprise has been tremendously successful in protecting the country from catastrophic attack for the past twenty years. Now, policymakers are keen to capitalize on the U.S.

³ Interim National Security Strategic Guidance, The White House, March 2021 <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/03/interim-national-security-strategic-guidance/>.

⁴ “Counterterrorism Spending: Protecting America While Promoting Efficiencies and Accountability,” Stimson Center, May 2018, https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/CT_Spending_Report_0.pdf.

⁵ David Francis, “Here’s Osama bin Laden’s Letter to the American People,” *Foreign Policy*, May 20, 2015, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/05/20/heres-osama-bin-ladens-letter-to-the-american-people/>.

investment in counterterrorism, build upon gains in protecting the homeland, foster alliances to share the burden of fighting terrorists abroad, and most critically, do all this in a financially sustainable manner. In the words of then presidential candidate Joe Biden, “We must maintain our focus on counterterrorism, around the world and at home, but staying entrenched in unwinnable conflicts drains our capacity to lead on other issues that require our attention, and it prevents us from rebuilding the other instruments of American power.”⁶ But how the United States extracts itself from extended deployments directly contributes to the global violent extremist threat.

President Biden’s warning that focusing too closely on counterterrorism alone drains America’s capacity to deal with other, equally pressing threats is well taken. But the caution against “unwinnable” conflicts applies Cold War terms of victory and defeat to problems that require a nonbinary approach to interstate asymmetric warfare, including adversaries’ use of militant and terrorist proxies. This means seeing counterterrorism efforts not in Cold War terms of victory or defeat, but rather as ongoing efforts—short of both war and peace—in which both lethal and nonlethal tools are employed to compete with adversaries over time and disrupt acts of terrorism.⁷ The goal here is to keep threats at bay, not to destroy them and install something better in their place. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, President Biden seemed to come to a similar conclusion: “There is a big difference between large-scale, open-ended deployments of tens of thousands of American combat troops, which must end, and using a few hundred Special Forces soldiers and intelligence assets to support local partners against a common enemy. Those smaller-scale missions are sustainable militarily, economically, and politically, and they advance the national interest.”⁸

Terrorism poses a persistent but not an existential threat to the United States. Terrorist attacks grab the public’s attention, skewing the inherently political process of developing and resourcing the national response, especially over time. But the United States faces a wide range of national security threats—white supremacism and other domestic violent extremists, nuclear programs, cybersecurity, environmental challenges, foreign espionage, transnational organized crime, election security, and failed states, to name a handful—and decades of investment to address one acute threat can cumulatively divert investment from other, equally pressing threats. Put simply, the goal of counterterrorism should be to transform the problem from a national security priority to a law enforcement issue. In November 2019, Russell E. Travers, then acting director of the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), noted, “We will never eliminate terrorism, but a tremendous amount of good work has been done, which facilitates a conversation about comparative risk.”⁹ That conversation should focus not only on comparative risk but also on cost. By investing so many resources into the counterterrorism mission for two decades, the United States built up the capability to run a highly efficient and effective rate of operations and other counterterrorism functions. But the inherent tradeoff was that all those dollars, intelligence resources, and more went to support primarily kinetic missions. Thus, two factors—widening the national security aperture to address other priority threats, and making the

⁶ Joseph R. Biden, “Why America Must Lead Again,” *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2020, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

⁷ For more on fighting such hybrid warfare, see Michael Eisenstadt, *Operating in the Gray Zone: Countering Iran’s Asymmetric Way of War*, Focus 162 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2020), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/operating-gray-zone-countering-irans-asymmetric-way-war>.

⁸ Biden, “Why America Must Lead,” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

⁹ Travers, “Counterterrorism in an Era of Competing Priorities,” <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/counterterrorism-era-competing-priorities-ten-key-considerations>.

counterterrorism mission more sustainable over the long term—now underlie the need to rationalize counterterrorism efforts.

As it happens, turning the corner on counterterrorism will require less investment in expensive hard power (military) and much more investment in inexpensive soft power (intelligence, diplomacy, civilian capacity building).¹⁰ That shift will entail a period of rebalancing, along with a transition period of burden shifting among partners and allies. U.S. military commanders were among the first to recognize this need. In 2013, then U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) commander Gen. Jim Mattis stated, “The more that we put into the State Department’s diplomacy, hopefully the less we have to put into a military budget as we deal with the outcome of an apparent American withdrawal from the international scene.”¹¹

Investing in Alliances and Partnerships

Under the Trump administration, a series of unaligned national strategies alternatively called for a shift away from counterterrorism and toward Great Power competition or for doubling down on the counterterrorism mission set. Speaking in February 2017, Joint Chiefs chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford laid out a “4+1” framework guiding U.S. Department of Defense prioritization of international threats and the capabilities needed to address them. Countering terrorism and violent extremism represented the “plus one” in the framework, after strategic competition with China and Russia and regional threats Iran and North Korea.¹² But no clear direction followed about how to operationalize this declared shift in terms of resource allocation or mission prioritization. In fact, the production of three largely unaligned national security strategies only exacerbated the problem. In the words of one former senior U.S. counterterrorism official, “I would challenge anyone to read the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, and the National Strategy to Counter Terrorism and tell me where we should spend our resources.”¹³ The Biden administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance paper notes the need to “meet the challenges not only from Great Powers and regional adversaries, but also violent and criminal non-state actors and extremists,” among other threats, from climate change to infectious disease and more.¹⁴ But like Trump administration strategies, this interim guidance lacks direction on how to budget limited resources across these threats.

One key area of overlap among the Trump administration’s various national security strategies, which is shared by Biden administration statements, is the desire to work with allies and partners to counter global threats. The Trump administration’s counterterrorism strategy declared that the United States “must relentlessly focus on countering terrorism that jeopardizes American citizens and interests,” and not “dilute

¹⁰ Katherine Zimmerman, *Beyond Terrorism: Defeating the Salafi-Jihadi Movement* (American Enterprise Institute, October 2019), <http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Beyond-Counterterrorism.pdf?x88519>.

¹¹ Zach Silberman, “The Military Understands Smart Power,” U.S. Global Leadership Coalition, March 8, 2013, <https://www.usglc.org/blog/the-military-understands-smart-power/>.

¹² Fred Dews, “Joint Chiefs Chairman Dunford on the ‘4+1 Framework’ and Meeting Transnational Threats,” Brookings Institution, February 24, 2017, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/brookings-now/2017/02/24/joint-chiefs-chairman-dunford-transnational-threats/>.

¹³ Former senior U.S. counterterrorism official, speaking at an expert roundtable held under Chatham House Rule, October 29, 2020.

¹⁴ White House, “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance,” March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

our counterterrorism efforts by attempting to be everywhere all the time, trying to eradicate all threats.”¹⁵ The Biden administration’s Interim National Security Strategic Guidance similarly pledges not to engage in “forever wars” and to “right-size” the U.S. military presence in the Middle East “to the level required to disrupt international terrorist networks, deter Iranian aggression, and protect other vital U.S. interests.”¹⁶ Yet developing, regional threats must also be addressed to prevent their growth into global threats targeting the U.S. homeland. Recall, for example, that President Barack Obama dismissed the Islamic State as the “junior varsity squad” in comparison to al-Qaeda, just six months before the group seized territory the size of Britain spanning parts of Iraq and Syria.¹⁷ America failed to foresee the IS threat, and then had no choice but to create a global coalition to inflict battlefield defeat upon the group.

Therefore, to address terrorist threats that do not imminently jeopardize U.S. citizens and interests, the United States must build robust, sustainable long-term alliances and coalitions *focused on conditions conducive to fragility, radicalization, and violent extremism*. Washington can and should take the lead on efforts where U.S. interests are most acutely at risk, but it should also very actively support other partner-led efforts. Partners will be far more willing to lead if the United States demonstrates a commitment to play small but critical enabling roles.

Under President Trump, the United States withdrew from a laundry list of international treaties and institutions, took a dismissive attitude toward America’s traditional European allies, belittled the NATO alliance, and dispensed with alliance building in favor of highly transactional and, typically, bilateral international engagement.¹⁸ Trump’s policies led one European counterterrorism official to comment, “Does the Trump administration not understand that its actions in Syria are undermining our national security? We are not an ocean away from Syria; the problem is at our back door.”¹⁹

The Biden administration’s need to restore U.S. credibility as a partner is all the more urgent following the Trump administration’s multiple knee-jerk announcements on military withdrawals from Syria. Defending his October 2019 decision to withdraw troops, President Trump tweeted that the United States “can always go back & BLAST!” should the Islamic State make a comeback. To which Brett McGurk—who previously

¹⁵ White House, “National Strategy for Counterterrorism,” December 2018, https://www.dni.gov/files/NCTC/documents/news_documents/NSCT.pdf.

¹⁶ White House, “Interim National Security Strategic Guidance,” March 2021, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NSC-1v2.pdf>.

¹⁷ David Remnick, “Going the Distance,” *The New Yorker*, January 20, 2014, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/27/going-the-distance-2?currentPage=all>.

¹⁸ See, e.g., “Trump Administration Announces Withdrawal from Four International Agreements,” *American Journal of International Law*, January 14, 2019, <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/american-journal-of-international-law/article/trump-administration-announces-withdrawal-from-four-international-agreements/83E4D3458A857770EA66160233F5382C>; and Alexander Smith and Shannon Pettypiece, “NATO Gathering Descends into Acrimony as Trump Criticizes Allies,” NBC News, December 4, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/nato-summit-braces-friction-after-bruising-first-day-n1095296>.

¹⁹ Matthew Levitt and Aaron Y. Zelin, “Repatriating Western Jihadists: The Impact of U.S. Syria Policy,” PolicyWatch 3086, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, February 27, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/repatriating-western-jihadists-impact-us-syria-policy>.

served as President Trump's envoy to the counter-IS coalition and now serves in the Biden White House—responded, “Actually, you can’t. Who is going to sign up with us? Who is going to fight with us?”²⁰

The United States needs to “do stuff,” as the truism goes, to get allies to participate in and contribute toward alliances. This means leading on some counterterrorism lines of effort and supporting on others. As Secretary of State Antony Blinken acknowledged, U.S. allies “raise the questions of the durability of some of the actions we’re taking,” and the only effective answer to those questions is U.S. actions, not words.²¹ In order to convince allies to share more of the counterterrorism burden abroad, the United States must first convince them it will follow through on its commitments. The United States is the only country in the world with the assets capable of supporting military counterterrorism deployments over time, including key functions such as airborne refueling, transport and logistics, and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR). In the words of one European official, “The enabling capacity of the United States is monumental.”²²

The United States will also have to invest in building partners’ capacity so that they can gradually assume more roles. In this formulation, any real burden sharing will have to be preceded by burden shifting, a process that will allow partners to develop their capabilities. Traditionally, moreover, the allied commitment to military counterterrorism missions decreases as the U.S. military posture declines. This calls for maintaining small American advise-and-assist efforts to support partner-led missions.

Here, the U.S. supporting role in Operation Barkhane is instructive. France has deployed some 5,000 soldiers to the Sahel region under the operation, fighting terrorists alongside the armies of the G5 Sahel (Mauritania, Mali, Chad, Burkina Faso, and Niger).²³ The Niger-based U.S. contingent consists of 800–1,000 personnel serving in support roles, with aerial missions generally flown out of bases outside Africa. “With very few assets, the United States are [*sic*] providing asymmetric value not only from a tactical viewpoint, but also in terms of its strategic effect,” a U.S. Defense Department official explained.²⁴ Over time, Washington significantly reduced its level of support, while European forces have filled the gap. Brig. Gen. Cyril Carcy—the French air force officer who serves as Operation Barkhane’s deputy commander—noted, however, that “even though our dependency on the United States has diminished, we really need their help, as everything will take us longer...What takes us a month right now would take us a month-and-a-half without the U.S. help.”²⁵

Such an approach, however, requires investing more resources in terrorism prevention efforts and not just in more drones and Special Forces to “find, fix, and finish” today’s terrorists. Unfortunately, over the past two decades U.S. counterterrorism policy and programming abroad have been overly militarized, without commensurate investment in civilian terrorism prevention capabilities. Both at home and abroad, investing in

²⁰ Bobby Allyn and Rachel Martin, “Former Trump Envoy: Syria Withdrawal Is ‘Haphazard’ and ‘Almost Unprecedented,’” National Public Radio, October 8, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/10/08/768257239/former-trump-envoy-syria-withdrawal-is-haphazard-and-almost-unprecedented>.

²¹ “Transcript: NPR’s Full Interview with Secretary of State Tony Blinken,” National Public Radio, February 16, 2021, <https://www.npr.org/2021/02/16/968332308/transcript-nprs-full-interview-with-secretary-of-state-tony-blinken>.

²² European official, speaking at an expert roundtable held under Chatham House Rule, November 17, 2020.

²³ “No ‘Immediate’ Reduction of France’s Sahel Force, Says Macron,” France 24, February 16, 2021, <https://www.france24.com/en/france/20210216-france-will-step-up-anti-terror-efforts-in-the-sahel-says-macron>.

²⁴ Murielle Delaporte, “U.S. Military Support in Sahel: Allies at Work,” Breaking Defense, May 14, 2020, <https://breakingdefense.com/2020/05/us-military-support-in-sahel-allies-at-work/>.

²⁵ Ibid.

terrorism prevention programs will be critical to getting ahead of the radicalization challenge, whatever the ideology driving the violent extremism.

The United States should thus draw on its civilian departments and agencies to help foreign countries strengthen their ability to address radicalization, arrest and try terrorism suspects within the rule of law and with respect for human rights, and work with private and nongovernmental partners to build resilient communities. An example of an effective U.S. program is the State Department's Counterterrorism Partnerships Fund (CTPF). Working with the Departments of Homeland Security and Justice, the CTPF focuses on building up foreign partners' law enforcement responses to terrorism, reforming the security sector, strengthening counterterrorism legal frameworks, prosecuting terrorism suspects, handling terrorist inmates, and other civilian tasks. While military capacity building is an essential component of any counterterrorism program, it must be coupled with investment in partners' civilian departments and agencies, such as ministries of justice, interior, and corrections, among others. Shifting away from an overreliance on expensive hard power, and investing heavily in soft power instead, is the key to handling the fundamentally social underpinnings of the terrorism challenge, even as military capacity building must have a place in any counterterrorism program.²⁶

"Ultimately," CENTCOM commander Gen. Kenneth McKenzie cautioned, "enduring stability in the Middle East will not hinge on military capabilities unless they're reduced to a point that invites further instability."²⁷ A U.S. presence in key regions generates its own antibodies, which, in partnership with allies, can prevent conflict regions from spiraling out of control, creating conditions in which extremism grows and drawing in Great Power and near power competitors. But as underscored in the 2020 Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability—a U.S. interagency plan submitted to Congress as required under the Global Fragility Act of 2019—military force should be only one part of the solution. While generating support for preventive or crisis management efforts can be difficult, such initiatives are especially important to break the cycle of fragility and should be prioritized in areas where today's strategic investment can mitigate tomorrow's overwhelming crisis. For example, small amounts of U.S. financial support could fund local efforts to facilitate meaningful security and justice sector reforms, enhance provision of essential services, reduce corruption, and enfranchise disengaged sectors of society such as women, children, and minorities. As the strategy notes, "Strategic investment in prevention can save billions of U.S. dollars and achieve better outcomes over the long run."²⁸ It is a struggle, however, to secure funding today to address tomorrow's threats—finding ways to fund such efforts is an area where Congress could make a significant impact on the long-term security of the United States.

²⁶ Matthew Levitt, "America May Have Unlocked a Key to Fighting Terrorism—and It Doesn't Involve Drones," *Washington Post*, January 7, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/fighting-terrorism-takes-more-than-drones/2016/01/07/6786c68e-b3f4-11e5-a76a-0b5145e8679a_story.html.

²⁷ CENTCOM, "McKenzie Middle East Institute Engagement," <https://www.centcom.mil/MEDIA/Transcripts/Article/2497526/general-kenneth-f-mckenzie-jr-middle-east-institute-engagement-feb-8-2021/>.

²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *United States Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability* (2020), <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/us-strategy-to-prevent-conflict-and-promote-stability.pdf>.

Finally, America must address its domestic terrorism problem. In the eyes of many allies, the United States now functions as a de facto safe haven for transnational white supremacist and far-right violent extremists.²⁹ The January 6, 2021, insurrection threatened not only U.S. domestic institutions but also national security interests and foreign policy priorities. As an exporter of right-wing extremism, the United States has seen its image tarnished, undermining one of its best tools to draw partners to join counterterrorism efforts around the world: our example. “For almost two decades,” Russell Travers, the former acting NCTC director, noted, “the United States has pointed abroad at countries who are exporters of extreme Islamist ideology. We are now being seen as the exporter of white supremacist ideology.”³⁰

Of course, counterterrorism burden sharing may not always be possible. Even close partners who share a common overall sense of terrorist threats may prioritize them differently, or apply a different risk-reward calculus for any given action. But America’s closest allies tend to seek its partnership. “There might be some level of post-traumatic stress disorder” as a result of the Trump administration’s isolationism, unilateralism, and impulsive withdrawals in places like Syria, a European official explained. “But at the end of the day, all Europeans want a strong security partnership with the U.S. The question is whether this cooperation will be limited to core missions (identifying and sharing information about terrorist networks) or if we can move beyond this and together address the breeding grounds of terrorism and stabilization missions (Syria, Iraq, the Sahel).”³¹ The key to making the latter development more likely may come down to the United States revisiting its traditional reluctance to share decisionmaking with its European partners, and European partners revisiting their traditional discomfort over burden sharing.³²

Navigating Areas of Disagreement

“Diplomacy requires credibility,” President Biden has noted, adding that “in the conduct of foreign policy, and especially in times of crisis, a nation’s word is its most valuable asset.”³³ The first step in that direction is holding close consultations with partners and allies to determine how they prioritize the national security threats facing their countries and finding areas of common cause. Such meetings also present opportunities to help shape partners’ and allies’ threat perceptions, and build consistency between U.S. and partners’ and allies’ threat perceptions. There is broad consensus on the threats posed by Sunni Islamist extremists like the Islamic State and al-Qaeda, for example, although sharp divisions—over matters like the Turkish incursion into

²⁹ United Nations, “Member States Concerned by the Growing and Increasingly Transnational Threat of Extreme Right-Wing Terrorism,” CTED Trends Alert, April 2020, https://www.un.org/sc/ctc/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CTED_Trends_Alert_Extreme_Right-Wing_Terrorism.pdf.

³⁰ Travers, “Counterterrorism in an Era of Competing Priorities,” <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/counterterrorism-era-competing-priorities-ten-key-considerations>.

³¹ European official, Chatham House Rule roundtable, November 17, 2020.

³² Charles Thépaut, *A New West in the Middle East: Toward a Humbler, More Effective Model of Transatlantic Cooperation*, Policy Note 88 (Washington DC: Washington Institute, 2020), <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/new-west-middle-east-toward-humbler-more-effective-model-transatlantic-cooperation>.

³³ Biden, “Why America Must Lead,” <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2020-01-23/why-america-must-lead-again>.

northern Syria and whether to repatriate foreign fighters—have defined how key countries address these threats.³⁴

In some areas, disagreements persist over the threat level and the appropriate response to extremist actors, such as with Lebanese Hezbollah, Iraqi and other Shia militias, and Iranian operations such as assassination and bombing plots in Europe in recent years.³⁵

Hezbollah offers a case in point on how to navigate complicated matters related to violent extremism that include differences of opinion between transatlantic partners. Hezbollah poses a threat not only to regional stability in the Middle East,³⁶ but to international security as well, including in Europe. Consider, for example, Hezbollah's stockpiling caches of ammonium nitrate—used to make explosives for terrorist attacks—in Europe, including in France.³⁷ According to the U.S. State Department, Europe now serves as a “vital platform” for Hezbollah operational, logistical, and financial activities.³⁸ However, several European Union member states, led by France, have long resisted efforts to designate Hezbollah as a terrorist group in its entirety under the EU's counterterrorism designation authority (Common Position 931).

There are many reasons for this policy debate, though even the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation—Europol—concedes that Hezbollah is active in Europe and that the EU's 2013 decision to designate only part of the group undermines investigations into its activities in Europe. In its 2020 European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report, Europol assessed that Hezbollah “is suspected of trafficking diamonds and drugs and of money laundering via the trade in second-hand cars. Capital is sent to Lebanon through the banking systems but also through physical transport of cash via commercial aviation.” However, the report added, Hezbollah “investigations face the difficulty of demonstrating that the funds collected are channeled to the military wing of the organization.”³⁹

³⁴ Charles Thépaut and Matthew Levitt, “The Counter-ISIS Coalition Has Much to Do After Baghdad's Death,” PolicyWatch 3213, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, November 8, 2019, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/counter-isis-coalition-has-much-do-after-baghdad-is-death>.

³⁵ Matthew Levitt, “Iran's Deadly Diplomats,” *CTC Sentinel* 11, no. 7 (August 2018), available at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/irans-deadly-diplomats>; Matthew Levitt, “‘Fighters Without Borders’: Forecasting New Trends in Iran Threat Network Foreign Operations Tradecraft,” *CTC Sentinel* 13, no. 2 (February 2020), available at <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/fighters-without-borders-forecasting-new-trends-iran-threat-network-foreign>.

³⁶ Matthew Levitt, “Hezbollah's Regional Activities in Support of Iran's Proxy Networks,” Middle East Institute, July 2021, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/policy-analysis/hezbollahs-regional-activities-support-irans-proxy-networks>.
³⁷ “Ammonium Nitrate Destroyed or Discovered in France,” Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Map and Timeline, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/hezbollahinteractivemap/#id=1250>.

³⁸ “State Department: Hezbollah Sees Europe as ‘Vital Platform’ for Operational, Logistical and Fundraising Activities,” Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Map and Timeline, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/hezbollahinteractivemap/#id=1246>.

³⁹ “Europol Details Hezbollah Money Laundering Scheme,” Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Map and Timeline, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/hezbollahinteractivemap/#id=788>.

U.S. officials across administrations consistently press the EU to expand its ban of Hezbollah, and members of Congress have issued bipartisan resolutions calling for the same.⁴⁰ Such efforts should continue, but an EU designation of Hezbollah is not the only tool available to restrict the group's operational capabilities.

The political and diplomatic reality that EU decisions are carried out by consensus means that a full designation of Hezbollah is dependent on getting all twenty-eight member states to agree on an issue that is the subject of significant policy debate. While continuing to try to move that debate along, what the U.S. government has successfully done over the past few years is work simultaneously with European countries at a national level and see what domestic policy tools they have at their disposal to constrict Hezbollah's operating environment. Some countries that have domestic terrorism designation authorities, like Britain, added all of Hezbollah to their terrorist proscription lists. Others, like Kosovo, enacted designation authorities and banned Hezbollah. But other countries that lack domestic designation or sanction authorities, and might otherwise have just pointed to the need for an EU-wide designation that they could implement, were convinced to use other tools. Germany banned Hezbollah and conducted law enforcement raids across the country. Lithuania used immigration authorities to restrict the travel of Hezbollah operatives in and out of the country. Austria employed its authority to ban the symbols of dangerous organizations and banned Hezbollah symbols, including its flag, explicitly arguing that the group makes no distinction between its political and military arms.

These countries broke the ice and have now paved the way for other countries to take actions of their own targeting Hezbollah, demonstrating that taking such action does not put a country at risk of Hezbollah retaliation, for example. One common thread among these various actions is that each respective national parliament got engaged on the issue. Among European parliaments currently engaged on the Hezbollah issue are those in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Spain, Switzerland, and the European Parliament itself. Congress could play a very constructive role on this issue by engaging with members in these and other European parliaments to press for some type of national-level action curtailing Hezbollah activities in their countries.

When engaging with European parliamentarians, members of Congress should note other examples of transatlantic cooperation targeting Hezbollah. Operation Cedar, for example, involved law enforcement agencies from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the United States, and Europol, and led to the arrest and conviction in a Paris court of several Hezbollah operatives and their associates.⁴¹ And both Interpol and Europol are full participants in the Law Enforcement Coordination Group (LECG), coordinated by the State Department, which convened a special meeting in Europe of more than twenty-five governments—plus Europol and Interpol—specifically focused on “countering Hezbollah’s terrorist and illicit activities.”⁴²

Conclusion

⁴⁰ “Bipartisan Resolution Urging EU to Designate Hezbollah a Terrorist Organization Introduced,” July 26, 2021, <https://teddeutch.house.gov/news/documentsingle.aspx?DocumentID=403016>.

⁴¹ “Mohammed Nouredinne and Associates Arrested in Operation Cedar,” Lebanese Hezbollah Select Worldwide Activities Map and Timeline, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, <https://www.washingtoninstitute.org/hezbollahinteractivemap/#id=598>.

⁴² U.S. Department of State, “Fifth Meeting of the Law Enforcement Coordination Group Focused on Countering Hizballah’s Terrorist Activities,” December 14, 2017, <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2017/12/276609.htm>.

To be sure, the United States and Europe are intimate partners when it comes to countering terrorist threats (tactical counterterrorism), and both are keen to get better at countering global violent extremism (strategic counterterrorism). Together, the United States and our European allies share not only values but also a sense of collective security.

Moving ahead, this cooperation will need to go beyond critical but tactical issues—like sharing biometric information of known and suspected terrorists and setting up joint task forces—to strategic issues as well. For example, countering violent extremism cannot be tied to any one ideology alone. Today, the world faces threats from a wider array of dangerous actors than at 9/11, to include not only Sunni jihadist threats but those from across the ideological spectrum, including white supremacists, neo-Nazis, anti-government militias, incels, Shia extremists, and more. Nor are these threats unique to any one part of the world. The threats are more geographically dispersed than they were twenty years ago, including rising threats in old arenas like South Asia, new ones like Africa, and—in the context of white supremacist extremism—the West.

In the interests of international security, both the United States and our European partners will have to compromise on complicated issues. Europe, for example, will have to do better on repatriation of foreign terrorist fighter nationals—the situation in detention camps like al-Hawl in Syria is untenable, and it is already becoming a breeding ground for the next generation of violent extremists. America, for its part, must come to terms with the dangers posed by the spread of hate speech, disinformation, and terrorist content online and find ways to address this challenge within First Amendment limits. The Biden administration's decision to join the Christchurch Call is a step in the right direction, but addressing dangerous online content is an issue that demands bipartisan congressional attention.

In short, the United States needs to reinvest in alliances and partnerships to effectively counter global violent extremism, starting with our closest transatlantic partners. Together, we must invest in civilian counterterrorism capacity building and, in an effort to finally get ahead of the radicalization curve, specifically in preventive efforts focused on good governance and healthy societies. We must listen to our allies and partners, understand how they perceive the security threats we aim to address, and find creative ways to navigate around areas of disagreement.

Mr. KEATING. I would like to thank all our witnesses for their statements, both the comprehensive nature of dealing just with the tactical issues and the strategic issues that are involved, and I am sure they will be parts of the questions that go forward.

I am going to recognize members sometimes out of order of seniority given the fact that we are in the midst of so many roll calls and because of that virtual format. I will do it in a basis of Democrat, then Republican, alternating back and forth when that is possible, and we will continue doing this hopefully to the conclusion of the hearing without interruption.

Each member, if you miss your turn, let our staff know. We will circle back to you, and if you seek recognition, you have got to unmute your microphone and address the chair verbally for those that might be wandering into this room, the few that they may be.

So I would like to now recognize Representative Kathy Manning for 5 minutes.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Chairman Keating. Can you hear me okay? All right.

I am proud to co-lead H.Res. 359, a bipartisan resolution I introduced with my colleague, Chairman Ted Deutch, urging the European Union to fully designate Hezbollah in its entirety as a terrorist organization.

Mr. Levitt, you are an expert on the terrorist group Hezbollah. Do you believe any distinction can or should be made by any of our European allies between the so-called political and military wings of a terrorist group like Hezbollah?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you for your question. The simple way to answer it is not to ask me but to ask Hezbollah leaders themselves who have been very, very clear in the fact that there is no distinction to be made between the various wings of their organization. Even Europol's latest terrorism situation and threat report makes this clear, that the distinction that was made in 2013 undermines their ability to carry out investigations.

There is a political issue going on here that is primarily driven by France, but that does not mean on the one hand that while we continue to pursue this issue with our colleagues that we cannot do other things. There has been some significant progress at national levels with different European countries doing different things. Some have passed designation authorities.

Some that do not have them have used immigration authorities or authorities that enabled them to ban certain symbols, and in each of these instances, what has driven these domestic actions has been, in part, actions within their parliaments.

And I think therefore, that U.S. Congress engagement not only at the EU level but at national European parliamentary levels could be very effective in this regard.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you.

Mr. Pantucci, there are many ways for us to work with our European allies and partners to exchange best practices to counter violent extremism and white supremacy. Can you talk to us about which has proven to be the most effective forum for us to cooperate to counter the global threat of white supremacy?

Mr. PANTUCCI. Thank you for the question. I think at the moment, the problem of white supremacy is one—or the extreme right

wing is one that I think we are still trying to work out exactly where the best forums to deal with this are, in part because we are still trying to understand the exact parameters of the problem.

I think traditionally, it has been something that has been the respite, the remit of police forces. And I think police forces have traditionally been the ones on the front line dealing with this. Increasingly, we have seen intelligence agencies moving into this space as well, and that, you know, enhanced cooperation at that level is probably quite effective.

But if I think about these groups and how they play out on the ground, I think trying to engage, frankly, at a policing level is probably a very good place to start because they are really—you know, these groups are quite diffuse. They are very much within our communities. They haven't necessarily got the same sort of international links that you get from, you know, groups or other ones. They also are developing some online communications, but it really is something that I think police forces seem to be the ones who are dealing with most effectively so far. That is my sense. Thank you.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you. Okay.

Mr. Onidi, the transatlantic alliance has faced significant challenges in recent years and more recently than that. However, our countries share a common challenge when it comes to combating misinformation online, especially social media. How can we work better together to counter the rapid spread of online extremist propaganda?

Mr. ONIDI. Thank you. I would argue that a lot of progress has actually been achieved on this very aspect. We concentrated a few years ago on our differences. The fact that we had, you know, different constitution model, different approach, we would in the EU rather pursue a path toward hard legislation, and the U.S., rather voluntary efforts, but all this was the past.

What I have seen over the last months, I believe, is a very, very strong recognition of the absolute and vitally importance of requesting more from the different online platform and us as well being able to develop better tools to support them, to better understand also the type of ideological that was online and also have better channels of information with them in order to notify of terrorist-related material, but also, as Vidhya said, not only identifying material that should be withdrawn but work with the actors in order to identify people behind this sort of content and also work more with them in order to promote counter messaging, to promote actual material that would help individuals to see things in more objective ways.

So I think we are on a good path, slightly different approach, and still we have hard legislation on this, but we see that together, we speak with a very strong voice toward the platforms.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, and thank you to all of our witnesses. And thank you to our chairman for holding such an important hearing, and I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Representative manning.

The chair now recognizes Vice Ranking Member Joe Wilson from South Carolina for 5 minutes.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to thank the witnesses. And, Chairman, thank you for your leadership. Bill Keating does a good job trying to keep us in line.

And so, Dr. Levitt, last week, the CIA deputy director acknowledged early reports of foreign fighters traveling to join Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Are we at risk of another outflow of foreign terrorist fighters from Europe? How can we work with our European partners to address this threat?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you, sir, for the question. I think it is important to note that while I am very, very concerned about the situation in Afghanistan, the withdrawal, how the withdrawal happened, I think we need to recognize that Afghanistan in 2021 is not Afghanistan in 2001 and that the counterterrorism measures that our European colleagues have put in place, border security, biometrics, et cetera, today are infinitely better than they were back then.

I do not anticipate Afghanistan being a significant draw for western foreign fighters, in part, because there are already more attractive places to go in Syria and Iraq and other places. But we are going to have to keep a close eye, maybe not on huge numbers but on small numbers, and we are going to have to be worried about terrorist groups not limited to Al Qaeda being able to enjoy safe haven.

There are two issues in Afghanistan. One is the groups like Al Qaeda and the Haqqani network that will be able to operate in areas under Taliban control because they are close to the Taliban. But the vacuum created by the withdrawal is larger than the Taliban can fill, and therefore, groups like Islamic State khorasan ISK will be able to operate in those areas that are beyond Taliban control. So we are going to have a new problem set different than the one we have had before in Afghanistan, and we won't have the luxury of having the type of intelligence collection that we have relied on in Afghanistan for the past 20 years.

Mr. WILSON. And, Dr. Levitt, also on—sadly, with the reopening of training schools in Afghanistan for rogue suicide bombers, is the U.S. at risk of an attack of equal impact to 9/11, whether at homeland or abroad, and if so, what type of attack would you anticipate?

Dr. LEVITT. I think the likelihood of a terrorist spectacular attack like we saw for 9/11 is much, much smaller now, again, in part because of all of the different systems we have put in place. The counterterrorism infrastructure we have today is just so much different and better than it was 20 years ago and also because we have put in place the ability to collect information to be able to forecast and anticipate.

We cannot do that quite as well as we want to yet in Afghanistan because we are not on the ground, but I think that the most immediate threats will be in Afghanistan and in the region around Afghanistan before it will come to our shores or to our interests abroad. Over the medium to long term, there is that possibility, but we have time to mitigate that threat.

Mr. WILSON. And with your expertise and background on Hezbollah, what is the current threat that Hezbollah poses to Europe?

Dr. LEVITT. Hezbollah primarily poses a logistics and financing threat in Europe. But as the State Department revealed just a few months ago, Hezbollah has been moving ammonium nitrate material to be used to put together explosives through several European countries over the past few years. And as you saw in Burgas, Bulgaria, the successful attack, and in Cyprus, two thwarted attacks, Hezbollah is not shy about operating in Europe when it suits its interests.

To the extent that we recognize that ideology is not the issue we should be dealing with primarily, we should be dealing with extremism across ideologies, that means we should not be limited to Sunni extremism. We should be covering Shia extremism. We should not be limiting ourselves to Islamic extremism. We certainly need to be focusing on white supremacists and other types of domestic violence extremism.

Mr. WILSON. And I really am back again on a risk at home. I am very, very concerned about a rogue suicide bomber coming to, say, a football stadium and the panic that would occur where they do not have to kill that many people, but the panic would be incredibly horrific. And then, sadly, to me, the development of drones as we saw with the swarm of drones that Iran provided against the oil refinery in Saudi Arabia. It is so easy to purchase at a convenience store drones. How do we address that, attacking public buildings, legislative buildings within the United States?

Dr. LEVITT. These are both excellent questions. I think that the issue of suicide attacks in the United States is increasingly one, like other types of attacks, that is more likely to happen by home-grown violent extremists, including people who are not even foreign directed.

The issue of drones is beyond my expertise right here and now. Leave it—suffice it to say that the issue of dealing with terrorist acts, just the simple technologies that they are able to exploit to tremendous benefit is of real concern to many different parts of the U.S. Government, though most of the drones that can be bought at Walmart are not the type that can cause significant damage, for example, to Congress. It is a huge problem.

Mr. WILSON. Well, thank you very much for all of your participation. I am honored again to be here with Chairman Keating. Thank you.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

The chair now recognizes Representative Dean Phillips of Minnesota for 5 minutes.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Greetings to our witnesses and gratitude for being with us.

I think it is fair to say that the United States and European nations take different approaches to protected speech and to regulating online content, but we clearly are all facing the challenge of hate, disinformation, and misinformation spread online.

So, Ms. Ramalingam, if you could start by sharing with us how you would characterize the most urgent needs for transatlantic cooperation relative to countering the spread of propaganda and radicalizing messages and content online.

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you for your question, Congressman.

And, you know, as an organization that operates both in Europe and in the United States, we obviously firmly believe in and safeguard First Amendment protections, but, of course, the regulations in Europe are different and, you know, the tech companies' obligations to moderate content are very different based on the country that you are in.

As an organization that operates across that Transatlantic divide, our approach is not necessarily focused on removal of content but ensuring that there are safer alternatives online. So this is not about cooperation and accountability for the tech companies. It is not just about that. It is about ensuring that we are using these digital platforms to their full advantage to assign posts to individuals who are at risk for demonstrating their vulnerabilities online that there are there options for them to exit.

There is a raft of evidence that has been growing over the last several years demonstrating that if you engage these individuals online, if you start conversations with them, if you seek to channel them into support programs, they are actually disproportionately likely to engage with those offers as compared to the general public.

So there is more work that we need to do to take the offline terrorist prevention infrastructures that we have built and ensure that those same practitioners have the digital literacy and the capability to begin to engage online, and that means everything from, you know, ensuring that we can assess risk online and that we translate the way that we assess vulnerability offline into the online space, but also ensuring that we can kind of manage that channelling of individuals from the online space into offline support programs.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So it is your argument and belief that that is the mechanism that we should be looking to and you are convinced that it will work and is working?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. I am convinced that in the 21st century there cannot be any offline terrorism prevention program that does not have that engagement online. There is no longer a divide between the offline and online space. We all live our lives in both worlds, and so if we are going to be effective in our fight against terrorism, we have to be reaching out to those communities online. It cannot just be about removing content. You remove the post, you remove the account, but that person still exists and still poses a threat to our communities.

Mr. PHILLIPS. So good old fashion intervention. I understand.

Mr. Levitt, similar question to you. How can governments on both sides of the Atlantic play a more intentional and energetic role for defeating the appetite for radicalization and extremist messages?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you for the question.

I think that the way to deal with this, the only way to deal with this is to be very local and to recognize that to stop people from having a cognitive opening to dangerous ideas means to make sure that they are a part of a functioning society, and I do not mean on a huge—I mean, in a neighborhood. I mean in their community. Can they access services? Do they feel like they belong to something? Do they feel that they are contributing to something?

Ultimately, some of the most important, some of the most critical things that we can do to reduce extremism are not going to be part of the security realm and shouldn't be securitized, to borrow a phrase that our European allies have been using for a long time. We should be doing those things for the right reason because good governance is really important, because rule of law is really important, because anticorruption is really important, and we should realize doing those will have tremendous security benefits.

But that means that when we step back and say how much do we stop the terrorist threat, a lot of our dollars should be going into clinical social workers, community programs because that will, not today, not tomorrow, and it will be difficult, therefore, for your metrics and valuation programs, but they will over time contribute to a healthier society that is not as amenable to, is not looking for more radical answers to complicated questions.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Are there some examples of governments already collaborating to that end?

Dr. LEVITT. There are many examples. There are many examples where governments have started programs like this and then politicians got wind of them and shut them down because politicians tend to want to know how is the money I am investing going to be spent to show me it is going to work. And I have to tell you, we in the United States do not have much of a culture of trial and error.

That is seen as political risk. And I give our European colleagues, even when they have failed, tremendous credit for trying and failing. People tend to put—

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you.

Dr. LEVITT. I will stop there. Thank you.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Yes, I am sorry. My time has expired, and I want to afford it to my colleagues.

Thank you, Mr. Levitt, Dr. Levitt, and to all of our witnesses. I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank Mr. Phillips.

Mr. Pfluger, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Mr. Chairman, thanks for organizing this.

Everything I learned about counterterrorism I learned from Dr. Matthew Levitt as a former colleague at the Washington Institute. I will focus my questions on a couple of things that you mentioned. And thank you to all the—the entire panel for talking about this important issue.

But, Matt, when it comes to the relationships, you kind of mentioned some of the fallout from the relationships that we have transatlantic partnerships and relationships to prevent terrorism. I mean, if you could name, you know, two or three that we really should focus on, where do you think the impact of the Afghanistan withdrawal is going to hurt us the most? Which relationships should we focus on the most in the short term that have the biggest impact on counterterrorism?

Dr. LEVITT. First of all, I cannot tell you how much pleasure it gives me to refer to you, sir, as Congressman Pfluger. It was a real honor to have you here as a military fellow at the Washington In-

stitute before you took a turn to politics. Great to see you. I, however, take no responsibility for whatever you know about terrorism.

I think the Afghanistan bit has to be divided into two baskets that both come down to renewing our reliability as a partner, and when I think of partnerships, I think of partnerships with allies, so alliances, EU, European member States and others around, and I think of partnerships, the way we had partners on the ground in Afghanistan, the way we have partners on the ground in Iraq, the way we have partners on the ground in Syria.

If I were a U.S. partner on the ground, say, in the Kurdish areas of Iraq or in northeast Syria, I would be really worried today about the staying power of the United States. I would be worried about whether I needed to have some type of backup plan.

And whether you are in favor of the U.S. having withdrawn from Afghanistan or not, whether you think the way it was done was good or not, I think this is something we can all agree on: The reality is those types of partners are raising eyebrows, and I have had conversations with people like that. This is happening.

And the second one is with our allies. It wasn't just the United States that found itself struggling to get its people and its allies out, and U.S. military and intelligence agencies did herculean efforts getting people out in a small amount of space, but we left our allies in the exact same position, very suddenly, and it wasn't the first time.

I was in the European capital that December when President Trump first Tweeted out, We are out of Syria. And they were really worried and really scared. They had people deployed with Syria, forward deployed with us based on the ability to rely on our presence, and they got no forewarning, and we need to do better in terms of communicating with our allies. As a former U.S. official, I know we tend to walk into a room and tell people how it is and how we want it to be. We need to start walking into a room and start asking, How do you see the threat? How do you see the problem? And we will get to how we see it and trying to bridge those gaps where they exist, but I think we need to be better listeners.

Mr. PFLUGER. Well, thank you for that.

Let me switch gears just a little bit and ask you a question about one of the things that I believe I learned in my fellowship, which was kind of the way that the Iranian government, whether it is IRGD Quds Force, or other aspects of it, will react.

When it comes to Qasem Soleimani, what sort of retaliation should we be expecting? Has that threat increased? Where—I mean, if you had the crystal ball, you know, where should we be looking and how should we be focusing our attentions to prevent some sort of really bad retaliatory attack?

Dr. LEVITT. I lack that crystal ball, but I will say this. I do think that, while very aggressive, taking out Qasem Soleimani ultimately led to greater international security. I think that it is telling that the Shi extremists, Iranian operatives, and Iran's proxies haven't responded in a massive international terrorist attack. By the way, of course, they shot rockets at our soldiers, which is no small matter, but they also have a very long memory, and I think they are patient.

The primary thing they want more than anything else as a legacy of Qasem Soleimani is to kick us out of the region, out of Iraq in particular. But I do think that we have to be very, very careful. The same way Lebanese Hezbollah has not forgotten the operation that took out arch terrorist Imad Mughniyeh in 2008, the Iranians are not going to soon forget the loss of Qasem Soleimani and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis, his Iraqi deputy.

And so I think it is safe to say that the U.S. intelligence security communities have been focused on it for quite some time.

Mr. PFLUGER. Thank you.

I think my time has expired. Please pass my very best to the entire Washington Institute. Thank you for your time here and all the panelists.

I yield back.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank Mr. Pfluger.

Mr. Schneider, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And to all of the witnesses, thank you for sharing your perspectives here.

Like Mr. Pfluger, I will echo that much of what I learned, if not all of what I have learned, is from Matt Levitt and in support of the Washington Institute as well.

But, Dr. Levitt, I want to turn to you with—I have a couple of questions. The first one deals with Hezbollah. We have talked a lot. In your written testimony, you talk about Hezbollah offering a kit in point and navigating complicated matters across borders. Seven years ago we worked together in drafting the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act. It has had great effect in limiting Hezbollah's reach, but they have been working to get around it.

What would you suggest as specific actions we might take alone in the U.S., in connection with our partners, to update, to do more to block Hezbollah and their efforts?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you for the question.

And tremendous pressure, everybody is saying, putting it all on me. But, look, HIFPA did a lot of things that a lot of people do not understand. The Lebanese Central Bank issued a circular after the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act was passed instructing banks that they had to follow these regulations. It had a real impact on Hezbollah's ability to bank. Hezbollah started storing money, more of the money that he used to store in Lebanon elsewhere, but it didn't change Hezbollah's overall financial position in Lebanon. And, in fact, while Hezbollah is not solely to blame by any stretch of the imagination for the financial and political implosion in Lebanon, it is one responsible actor. And one of the issues is the illicit financial activities that Hezbollah was engaged in through the banks.

My colleague, Penian Radaurd, just wrote a piece that was published yesterday arguing that one of the things we need to do is work more closely with the private sector and the NGO sector in Lebanon. As the political business and finance sectors are collapsing in Lebanon, we cannot allow the one last standing actor by default because it gets so much money from Iran to be Hezbollah at a time when ironically Hezbollah's political standing is actually falling.

So Lebanon presents a very, very difficult problem; but I think one of the areas where we and the Europeans disagree is would a designation mean that Europeans wouldn't be able to have political influence and sway in Lebanon. And I think the fact that United States has designated all of Hezbollah for a long time and we clearly have a lot of influence and sway in Lebanon means that you can.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Great. Thank you for that. I agree we have to do more, and we will.

Shifting gears a little bit, also in your written testimony you say, finally, America must address its domestic terrorism problem, which the FBI director was on the Hill this week talking about the significant growth we have seen in that. We have legislation that I have introduced with colleagues, the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act that would speak to that.

But I was hoping you could touch on the importance of bolstering our domestic efforts, law enforcement intelligence, et cetera, but also coordinating with our international allies and working with them to ensure that the U.S. isn't a net exporter of domestic terrorism, like White supremacist ideologists.

Dr. LEVITT. I think we first need to recognize from many of our allies abroad, they really do feel we have become an exporter of violent White supremacist extremism, and we need to get on top of that.

There are lots of ways to do that, and I do not have a particular this is exactly how to do it. I do think that we need to have some type of legislation that makes it clear to everybody that Neo-Nazi or White supremacists or antigovernment militia, when they carry out acts that are the definition of terrorism, that is terrorism. So that, for example, Muslim Americans do not say, well, when someone from our community does this act, it is terrorism; but when someone from another community does the exact same act, it is not. We need to fix that.

But if you even just want to use kind of State or existing Federal regulations, we have lots of regulations to deal with almost all types of terrorist activity, with the glaring, glaring exception of mass shooter attacks, which cannot be, for technical legal reasons, described as an act of terrorism right now. And I do think that we need to do a lot more within Second Amendment protections to address the fact that guns make terrorism more dangerous in this country.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. You make an important point. We do have the statutes on the books to tackle terrorism on the one hand, but I believe we need to, as the DTPA, Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, does, enhance our law enforcement working with, in this case, the Department of Justice, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security.

And with that, I am running out of time, so I will yield back. Thank you all again. This is an issue we have to address with urgency but also across borders working with our allies. I thank the witnesses.

I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative Schneider.

The chair now recognizes Representative Meijer from Michigan for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you, Mr. Chair, and thank you to our panelists who are here today.

I think this is a really important topic for us to be discussing, and so I really appreciate that we are taking time to better understand that transatlantic component on our global terrorism and just global security mindset here.

So I guess, Mr. Levitt, I have a question for you. You know, you mentioned that the way in which the U.S. has been disengaging from our conflicts—and we have seen this in Afghanistan—how that is really offering opportunities for global jihadist elements to seize upon the propaganda victory and boost their own morale.

As we look to rebalance and focus more on great power conflicts away from the post 9/11 conflicts, how in your mind do we end those engagements in ways that do not offer a strong upside for Jihada settlements?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you, sir, for the question.

A lot of it has to do with the how, not the what. And I think we need to recognize that, by the way, it is not just Sunni extremists, it is Shi extremists, and it is not just Islamic extremists, it is White supremacists that are looking at—if you follow them online, looking at the way things went down in Afghanistan and saying, look, maybe America is a paper tiger and you just got to wait them out and we can do this. And this has been a boon, a shot in the arm for the wide array of ideologies.

I think the most important thing, which is the core of this hearing, is how we go about working with allies to do this. When our allies are deployed with us, when they are at risk, when they are putting themselves at risk, we need to keep them completely in the loop, maybe even ask their opinions on how to go about doing it rather than leave them in a situation where they are kind of left holding the hot potato. And we have done this now several times over at least, let's say, two administrations. If we are going to ask our allies to step up and put themselves in harm's way, then we have to treat them as full partners when it comes to making big decisions that are going to affect their security.

Mr. MEIJER. And speaking of that, and I know there has obviously been a recent rift with France over some procurement in the Australia, U.K., U.S. alliance that was formed. But also recently President Macron had mentioned concerns about the ease of access that especially Middle Eastern based terrorists moving into the Shenzhen zone and France very much being a magnet for many of those attacks for a variety of reasons; but he expressed that concern and that the European Union and members of the Shenzhen zone may need to undertake and bolster their border monitoring and other components.

Do you see the U.S. as having a role in that type of monitoring in those transnational flows, speaking on the alliance front? And in general, I am curious your thoughts on how you see our European allies trying to better bolster their own domestic security?

Dr. LEVITT. Well, sir, I am going to be the last, quote/unquote, expert in Washington to tell you where his expertise ends, and my

ends at submarines, so I won't comment on the current flare-up between the U.S. and France.

But I do think that one area where the U.S. and our European allies, partners have had tremendous cooperation. And Olivier can speak to this firsthand. This is—one of his many areas of expertise is on this very issue, whether it is biometrics or information sharing, whether it is pairing up FBI not only with Interpol but specifically with Europol, the things that they have been able to do together and specific investigations of all different types and in shoring up the borders has been really tremendous. I do think they are going to have to find ways to backfill behind the types of intelligence we used to have coming out of Afghanistan that we are not going to have anymore.

We are not going to go dark. We are going to go dark gray, and they will find ways to fill that in. But I think that is something actually that is a success story and that will continue.

Mr. MEIJER. Thank you. I appreciate those responses.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

The chair now recognizes Representative Cicilline from Rhode Island for 5 minutes.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you, Chairman Deutch and Chairman Keating and our ranking members, Wilson and Fitzpatrick for this really important hearing. And thank you to our witnesses for your testimony.

As you all know, less than 2 weeks ago we commemorated the anniversary of September 11, and it is a reminder of our ongoing responsibility to protect our country from acts of terrorism.

And I think, you know we have learned a lot. I think we all recognize that terrorism continues to present itself in increasingly complicated ways and in new places, and the digital in particular has allowed us all to be more interconnected than ever, but also led to great global cooperation and economic relationships, but it has also in many ways tested our counterterrorism capabilities as we have seen that misinformation can quickly lead to radicalization online.

And so, Ms. Ramalingam, you mentioned five or six components of various European models in combating radicalization extremism. I assume that there is no reason to conclude that these same elements ought to be present in models that we create here in the United States? And in addition to that, are there any other lessons that we should take from those examples?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you, Congressman.

I do believe that all of those points apply here in the United States. In particular, our terrorism prevention mechanisms need to be locally driven, and this is the case whether we are talking about the Jihadist threat or whether we are talking about White nationalism. It needs to be locally driven, locally based. It needs to have Federal support but also local government support.

And, in particular, we need to draw on the existing suite of practitioners, licensed practitioners who have the capabilities to have conversations with people at risk.

This is not necessarily about setting up dedicated programs to counter Jihadism or to counter White supremacy. We need to be

building on those existing State frameworks and resources. There is going to be some training, some capacity building that needs to be done for those practitioners to get comfortable with dealing with cases, you know, with individuals who are presenting these kinds of ideologies.

But as I have mentioned and others on the panel have mentioned, this isn't necessarily an ideological battle. This is fundamentally about dealing with those underlying drivers, and the solution is going to be local.

So if there is one takeaway from those messages that I shared in my earlier testimony, it is about supporting at the local level the development of these kinds of prevention infrastructures.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you.

And with respect to the role of the social media platforms, which we see, you know, kind of what has changed, how quickly, you know, millions of people can be reached with completely false information that can assist in accelerating radicalization, are there specific actions that social media platforms can or should take to counteract those issues online? What are those? And then, second, are there specific actions we should take as the government to help regulate the spread of misinformation on radicalization on social media platforms, like Facebook and Twitter?

And if you could start, Ms. Ramalingam, and then I would like to hear from Mr. Onidi, could he also respond to that.

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Sure. Happy to start.

So we know that deplatforming works. There is a huge amount of evidence to show that. An example, Jihadists operating online have really struggled to rebuild their networks after the 2019 telegram takedown. There is many other cases here. So deplatforming works, and the tech companies need to be doing more of that.

But in order to effectively deal with terrorist abuse on these platforms and abuse by disinformation actors, we need to accept that there will always be content that falls into the gray zone and will not be liable for removal, and there will always be some spaces on these platforms that are not liable for moderation.

So with these cases, in addition to moderation efforts—and I cannot emphasize enough that tech companies need to do better on moderation, but in addition to that, the tech companies are in a unique position to offer safer alternatives to users who might be at risk of getting involved. This is a model that those companies regularly adopt in the suicide prevention space, in the child sexual exploitation space. They should be adopting similar safeguarding measures with audiences at risk of violent extremism and disinformation.

And I will hand over to Olivier.

Mr. ONIDI. Thank you very much.

Consistent with this analysis, I think the first important point was for all of us, American actors and European actors, to actually get all of these platforms to recognize that there was a problem, to recognize that they had a responsibility in this problem, and also to recognize that some of the choices they make, some of their commercial choices, but also some of the technical choices, those actually sometimes lead to dreadful negative effect.

I take a few examples. The first one, this quest for introducing systematic and to end encryption. This is very challenging. Of course, we want to protect the privacy of private communications; but if encryption does lead for law enforcement's end or others to be blind in the actual communications that is being spread across networks, this is the limit of what can be accepted, and then this is a major challenge we are now dealing with in the European Union.

The second example is the type of commercially oriented algorithms that are being used. There is also there quite a number of dreadful negative effects in the way those algorithms amplify the quest and the access to negative and dreadful material. And these are some of the work that we are conducting with them in order for them to be better at self-correcting some of the mistakes they are doing.

And then, finally, I think ultimately it is also for us public authorities to progressively set obligations on the platforms, obligations to be good citizens, obligations to recognize that because of the very negative effect some contents can have, they should also be part of providing some corrective measures.

Thank you.

Mr. CICILLINE. Thank you so much.

My time has expired. I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative.

The chair now recognizes Representative Wild from Pennsylvania for 5 minutes.

Ms. WILD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

My question is for Mr. Onidi. And specifically, following the January 6 attack on the U.S. Capitol, where I am right now, all of us are, and we know that an individual in France transferred something like \$500,000 in Bitcoin to one of the extremists who was involved in the insurrection before then dying by suicide, the person who transferred the Bitcoin.

Has there been any investigation by the EU into that transfer? And can you tell us about it?

Mr. ONIDI. I do not know about this case in particular, but I can tell you that what happened came as a shock to all of us. It did also confirm very much that work we had initiated across the Atlantic to actually broaden the kind of understanding of different motivations, different forms of ideologies being spread in order to insight violent extremism behavior was actually the right way to pursue.

And given the very intrinsic cooperation between investigators on both sides, I am sure that if this transfer has been monitored, that this is being examined now by the relevant law enforcement agencies on both sides.

Ms. WILD. But you do not know any details about that?

Mr. ONIDI. This particular case, no. I really apologize.

Ms. WILD. Okay. No. That is quite all right.

But following up on what you just said, what can you tell us about the parallels or the interconnectedness between the White supremacists, the Neo-Nazis, other extreme organizations on both sides of the Atlantic and how we can work together to best combat it?

Mr. ONIDI. This is at the heart of what we are working on for the moment. We are trying—the difficulty with these individuals are that they do not necessarily—they are not necessarily very outspoken as to the type of organizations they are members of. They use also extremely sophisticated ways of communication.

So the first endeavor we are confronted with is to try to identify beyond the individuals the type of networks, the type of organizations they are members of and from that try to see to what extent those organizations have actually international connections. In a number of cases, we have seen the physical travel pattern, communication patterns between the different organizations known under different names as well, which, again, incites us to work even more on this because what we would like to be able to do is, as we have done with known terrorism groupings ultimately, is to identify those organizations, designate those organizations as terrorist organizations in order then to be able to also apply all of the sanctions that are associated and that are at our disposal from our legislative framework, so access to violence, deny access to violence and deny access to traveling, and so on.

It is challenging because those are really new forms of working together, but it is really at the heart of what they are doing for the moment.

Ms. WILD. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I cannot see the clock. I assume I am out of time.

Mr. KEATING. Another minute if you would like.

Ms. WILD. All right. Well, then I will followup, Mr. Onidi. You know, one of the concerns that I have about what is happening here in the United States is and actually there is a parallel in Europe as well, and that is increasing public discourse by elected officials that I believe feeds into this kind of domestic terrorism, whether it is here in the United States or in the EU.

Can you comment on that and what the role is of these kinds of public statements by people who should be leading by example but are not?

Mr. ONIDI. Well, I mean, we are very attached also to freedom of speech on these facts, so I think we have somewhat of the same very strong values in terms of protecting freedom of expressions. What we are trying to do is try to demonstrate what kind of behavior, what kind of incitement coming from whoever, is it from a political individual, is it in the context of other individuals, so that we can actually take action because we have ways, also criminal ways to pursue when we have evidence of incitement for hatred, and so on.

It is a very, very difficult field. But, again, it is a lot of research trying to understand where this incitement comes from, whether it is from an organization, from the public, also opinion leaders. Many opinion leaders are also inciting to conduct a number of arrests, so in spite of the work, we are doing in order to better understand the different factors and manifestations of this.

Ms. WILD. Thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you for your questions.

The chair recognizes Representative Ted Lieu from California for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you, Chairman Keating. I want to thank Chairman Deutch as well for holding this important joint hearing, and I want to thank all of the witnesses.

I have a question for Mr. Levitt first about governmental programs you thought could help with terrorism. Now, I am a Democrat. I support governmental programs—[inaudible] Come out of Skid Row in Los Angeles.

Mr. KEATING. I think we lost him for a second.

Mr. LIEU. We have got lots of Latinos and African Americans. It is not like you are seeing a surge of terrorists coming from the—[inaudible]

Mr. KEATING. Representative Lieu, I think we are having some technical problems. Let's pause, and you can take back some of your time. See if they correct themselves, otherwise we can come back. Let's give it another try.

Representative LIEU.

We will come back to Mr. Lieu and work out the technical problems.

In the meantime, the chair recognizes for 5 minutes the chair of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, Representative Jim Costa from California.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, for holding an important subcommittee hearing on issues that are affecting all of us both in the United States and Europe.

I would like to address my first question to Mr. Pantucci. The European Commissioner Breton said yesterday that there is a growing feeling in Europe that something is broken in our transatlantic relations. As the chair of the Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue, I work with Chairman Keating and many other members.

We meet regularly between ourselves and the European Union, and we are concerned. Obviously, it has been a tough last 4 years when the President came to Europe in June and said we are. The recent U.S., U.K. Australia agreement known as AUKUS has obviously been very disturbing to our longtime ally France, a critical transatlantic partner.

What effect, if any, do we expect this agreement will have on our joint U.S.-EU ability to counter new and rising counterterrorism? Is this something that we can—I know there was a conversation with President Macron and President Biden yesterday, but I would like your assessment of it.

Mr. Pantucci?

Mr. PANTUCCI. Okay. Yes. I thought it was directed to me. I wasn't sure. Thank you for that question, Chair.

I think my response would be that I think we are seeing a moment in transatlantic relations wherein, particularly in France, you have had a lot of anger in response to the agreement between Australia, the U.S., and the U.K. It was a very big deal from that perspective.

The announcement of this agreement landed the day before the European Commission was launching its own Indo-Pacific strategy. So it landed at a particularly bad moment for Brussels, and it landed at a particularly bad moment for France in particular who was

ultimately the sort of the biggest loser from this particular engagement.

Mr. COSTA. So what do we need to do to repair things? I have said—and, you know, the partnership goes back post World War II is now, I think, a reflection, this relationship, of the longest peace time in Europe in over 1,000 years. You know, trust takes awhile to develop. I think we have developed it. But certainly in the last 4 years, there has been a lot of my European friends are wondering, you know, can we still count on America.

Mr. PANTUCCI. I think, as was pointed out by other speakers, the key is the United States needs to telegraph its messaging a little bit more clearly. I think maybe in Washington this was felt to be understood, but, obviously, it wasn't understood in Europe. I think at the end of the day, rebuilding the relationship is saying will just take communication and time. I think fundamentally the Transatlantic Alliance remains for both sides and is sort of the bedrock of their strategic security outlooks.

Mr. COSTA. I agree.

Mr. PANTUCCI. And in time it will come together.

Mr. COSTA. All right. I would like Ms. Ramalingam—I do not know that I have pronounced that properly, but your copy on Moonshot I was interested in. You have done a lot in terms of intergovernmental project on far right terrorism in Europe. Recently we have seen a situation in a number of European countries, including Portugal, where the Chega party won nearly 12 percent of the vote in 2021.

How does the U.S. and the EU work together to counteract right wing terrorism, social media, and all the impacts that are undermining, I think, our basic western democracies or attempting to undermine them?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you, Congressman. And your pronunciation was just fine. Thank you.

The U.S. has a lot to learn actually from our European partners around prevention of right wing terrorism, White nationalist terrorism. This is a threat and a problem set that European governments have been dealing with since prior to 9/11. And so many of the infrastructures that were developed deal with White supremacy in Europe have now well over 20 years of an evidence base around methods of prevention that are going to be most effective.

Mr. COSTA. In Germany and Denmark and a number of countries, yes.

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Absolutely, yes. Germany and Sweden in particular had some of the largest volumes of Neo-Nazis dating back to the 1990's, and so there is evidence around programs that were set up by both law enforcement, governments and by NGO's which we can build on in our own terrorism prevention mechanism.

So I think one of our main priorities here needs to be learning, listening to, you know, what has been effective in Europe and looking at how those models might apply here in the United States.

Mr. COSTA. Do you believe that is being done now?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. I believe that is being started. I believe we have just started listening and we have started that process of recognition that we can learn, that America can learn and does not necessarily need to be trialing new methods but learning from the

past. I think that recognition is there, but there is far more that needs to be done.

Mr. COSTA. Well, my time has expired. But, Mr. Chairman, in our next TLD meeting in December, we should maybe make this part of the agenda, and I am hoping we are going to be able to work our schedules so we can make that work.

But thank you again, thank the witnesses, and thank you, Mr. Chairman, for this important hearing.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thank you, Mr. Costa.

Mr. Lieu, you are recognized if the technology permits.

Mr. LIEU. Chairman Deutch, can you hear me?

Mr. DEUTCH. Yes, we can.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. Thank you.

Thank you, Chairman Deutch and Chairman Keating, for holding this important hearing.

I have a question first for Mr. Levitt. You earlier had mentioned about governmental programs that could help connect people to their community and help reduce the threat of terrorism. I am a Democrat. I support governmental programs. But what I see is, you know, we have, for example, Skid Row, a lot of poor homeless folks, but we do not see a surge of terrorism from folks coming out of Skid Row. We also have high poverty rates across America particularly among Latino African Americans, but we are not seeing a surge of terrorists who are African American Latinos.

I am just curious, what governmental programs are you referring to? And have they been shown to work?

Dr. LEVITT. Thank you for the question, Congressman Lieu.

You are absolutely right, we should take a step back and note that this is not a problem that is affecting the vast majority of society. Terrorism is an outsized problem because very, very few cases of radicalization can lead to very, very outsized outcomes. And it is not the case that you will have everything is fine in one community, but there are problems in another. Every community will have people, because we are all individuals, we are all human, who even in the same circumstances, very parallel circumstances will respond differently.

What we need to do, I believe, is make sure that everybody in that community is able to access the things we need to get by, not only food and education and housing, but purpose and belonging, and that is going to be different for every different person. I think, for example, now that there are going to be some significant military drawdowns as we rethink the U.S. counterterrorism posture, specifically the military posture, we should anticipate that we are going to have lots of servicemen, lots of servicewomen coming home. The vast majority are going to reintegrate into society fairly easily, some are going to need some help, and some are going to be looking for that camaraderie and that purpose, and they are going to find it with an extremist milieu.

So the type of programs I am talking about, I cannot point you to a specific program. I think it has to be local government. It should not be a Federal effort. Federally we need to come up with moneys to be able to empower programs at a local level to make sure that they are not communities that are disenfranchised.

In Minneapolis we realized that at some point within segments, not the whole, but within segments of the Somali-American community, there were pockets of extremism because they lack these types of belonging and purpose. When we had three different pilot projects in Minneapolis and L.A. And Boston, they found very, very different phenomena in each of those locations around the United States.

So we need to be very locally driven.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

And then my next question is for the panel. I am curious what you think about the impact of race on terrorism. When you look at January 6, the folks there, based on a Washington Post study, showed that they were there—the greatest predictor was based on the rate of change in their county, if it was declining in the White population. And if that was happening, then they would more likely show up on January 6. And I am just very curious what folks see in terms of is race playing a bigger role now than it used to be in terms of terrorism?

Mr. PANTUCCI. I think it was suggested to the whole panel, so maybe I will offer my 2 cents.

I think race is clearly a major driver of the kind of extreme right threat that we see that has become more prominent recently. But I would say is there has always been an issue actually on both sides of the coin. And if I think back to the United Kingdom, if you think about questions of race and you look at some of the early individuals who were joining al-Qaeda and who were going to training camps in Afghanistan—and this was in the 1990's and early 2000's—a lot of them were reports and experience, you know, the South Asian Britains living in the United Kingdom, race was an issue that was sort of aggravating them and making them feel disenfranchised to their community and making them look to some sort of vexation, some sort of group that would give them a sense of membership that then would lead them ultimately to in some cases join al-Qaeda.

So I think the question of race is many times constant, in many ways a crossover. It is really about people feeling alienated from their environment, and that is something which clearly generates problems.

So, yes, it is really about social fabric and social tensions. And if social tensions are very high, then the fabric of society gets very aggravated and torn, and that is what ultimately leads people to look for some extremist groups to help them understand the world and then to get them to train to react to it within.

So I think it is really about the social fabric intentions that really—you know, that race is clearly one of the major issues that they get picked at.

Mr. LIEU. Thank you.

And I cannot actually see the time. Do I have any time left?

Mr. KEATING. Well, I think you—why do not you take another 20 or 30 seconds, Representative, because I was so slow with the switch.

Mr. LIEU. Okay. So thank you.

Again, for the panel, I just want to push back a little bit on folks who said our allies are surprised by what the U.S. did. I just have

to say the former President campaigned on getting us out of endless wars, on getting us out of Syria, getting us out of Afghanistan. No one should be surprised. Biden also campaigned on that. So I do not know why our allies were surprised. Joe Biden was simply executing the withdrawal agreement that Trump signed last year. Trump reduced our troops from a high of over 15,000 down to 2,500. Biden completed the withdrawal. None of our allies should be surprised. The U.S. is simply not going to go engage in 20 years and fight a war merely for the purpose of trying to eliminate some terrorism. We are not going to do that anymore. No one should be surprised by that.

I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Representative Lieu.

I will now recognize Chairman Deutch who has been terrific, who somehow pulled this off, if he could coordinate some of our strategies as well as he overcame some of the challenges of this hearing, we would be in great shape. But thank you again for your leadership and for chairing this with our subcommittee.

And I now recognize Chairman Ted Deutch.

Mr. DEUTCH. Thanks. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, Ms. Ramalingam, the transatlantic relationship, the alliance has experienced significant challenges, and we have talked a lot about that. Though many members are currently, and common throughout so many of the members is the experience of internal struggles related to hate and extremism and the social media misinformation that fuels it. How, from a transatlantic perspective, how would you characterize the most urgent needs for transatlantic cooperation to counter the rapid spread of online radicalization and extremist propaganda?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you, Chairman.

There is a lot of work ongoing, international cooperation, which I would call really soft diplomacy efforts, to try and nudge the tech companies in the right direction. So the best example of that is the global internet forum to counterterrorism, and a lot of the initiatives following Christchurch.

That said, from my experience, the tech companies are most willing to respond in, you know, being very frank, in moments of tragic. So we saw, you know, after Christchurch and after January 6 that the tech companies will launch a knee-jerk reaction or they are willing to respond when governments impose legal and commercial imperatives to act. Essentially these type of knee-jerk reactions, inconsistent application of rules and regulations is very reactive rather than proactive.

I do think that there is hope for America to look to what has been done internationally in terms of European governments placing restrictions on the tech companies and looking at the efficacy of that when it comes to, in fact, fund terrorism prevention and modernization efforts. You know, I look forward to seeing the impacts of the soft diplomacy efforts, but, you know, bearing in mind my own understanding of how the tech companies are, when the tech companies are most compelled to act, it tends to be when those legal and commercial imperatives take precedence.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. So let me followup. If they are good at responding in the aftermath of tragedy and they respond to pressure,

what is the right way to get them to pay attention to this before there is another tragedy?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. So while I am not an expert on big tech, you know, big tech regulation efforts, from my experience, you know, governmental pressure does have an impact. You know, the tech companies are looking at, for example, the designation lists by the U.S. Government. They look at the FTO lists. They look at the STGT lists. They are looking at government regulations, and we can use those kinds of mechanisms to push the tech companies in the right direction and to ensure that there is consistent application of their modernization efforts across different forms of extremism. This is where one of the greatest gaps has emerged in the last several years. Obviously, the efforts to designate White supremacist organizations have really only just been given the attention that they deserve, but there are some efforts that I think government can take to push companies in the right direction using those kinds of levers.

Mr. DEUTCH. I appreciate that.

Let me just put a question out to the panel. When we are looking at the current threat landscape, as we try to address the ways to counter it, where are we seeing the greatest similarities between the threats facing the U.S. and the threats facing Europe? And how do we—and can we confirm that there are, in fact, those shared threats and prioritize them accordingly?

I will open that up to anyone on the panel.

Mr. ONIDI perhaps?

Mr. ONIDI. Well, thank you very much.

I think the closest in terms of the manifestation of what is going on both in the U.S. and in the European Union is the fact that we do have an increased number of individuals radicalizing and being led to commit violent acts, and this for very different ideological reasons.

And then I think it was extremely well explained by all of the members of the panel that at the end of the day, the ideological thought was just the excuse so to say, the packaging of why the individual would actually do and commit such a violent act; but intrinsically the motivations behind the reasons, the real reasons behind an individual being led to commit such dreadful acts are exactly the same on both sides.

We are also trying to deploy similar responses, local responses, responses that use a multitude of expertise, from the medical side to the actual police side as well. They are all important in order to better detect and better prevent such phenomenon. But this is really the essence of what we both are trying to find merely because these are the most recent and also the most numerous attacks we have been facing over the last years.

Mr. DEUTCH. Okay. I appreciate it. Thanks to all the witnesses for your participation today.

And thanks again to you, Chairman Keating, and I yield back.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you again, Chairman, for extraordinary flexibility in coordinating this, and I want to thank our witnesses again.

Usually I am in a position where I would be the first to ask questions, but I now realize, you know, it is always a difficult task end-

ing things up as well. But, you know, the title of today's hearing is "Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism." And as we have heard through this hearing and the testimony of the witnesses, this is—you know, it is not a homogenous, you know, type of discussion because it is very distinctive and dynamic in many ways.

The types of challenges we face are diverse, and the threats posed are similarly diverse. There is domestic terrorism. There is individuals and groups engaged in grievance-based violence. There are those that are inspired. They are online or through activities within groups to get involved and engage in this activity. And then around the world there are so many different types of terrorist organizations. I mean, you cannot name them all. We are focused so much now on Islamic States, but we are not looking, you know, comprehensively sometimes on the challenges we have. There is Boca Hiram in Africa, Gaza Strip, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan. You know, I could go on and on with the number of different groups.

So my question is to the panel as a whole, but I would like particularly Ms. Ramalingam to deal with this because part of it is preventative and deradicalizing people. But how can we tailor, you know, the kind of actions? And to the whole group as well, you know, in terms of our resources, in terms of curbing the violence and deterring, but also in programs of deradicalization, how can we tailor that or how much can we tailor that to specific groups and, importantly, by engaging specific groups in, you know, trying to thwart this activity?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Thank you, Chairman. I am happy to start off and then hand over to the rest of the panel.

My firm belief and based on my experience delivering this work across Europe is that we do not necessarily need programs focused on any one particular form of extremism. Yes, there are going to be cases that arise where ideology does need to be addressed, but actually the underlying skills which are required to deliver this work haven't thing to do with the ideology itself.

That said, the most effective programs do pair individuals at risk with someone who is likely to be credible and trusted with them. Oftentimes many of the European programs that operate in the space use former extremists in that space because, you know, they will have credibility with those individuals. So that is the area in which those sorts of programs need to be tailored, and offering that credibility, credibility will obviously look very different for a White supremacist than it will be for someone who is at risk for Jihadism. But, broadly speaking, the underlying skills required by those practitioners are really behavioral health methodologies, you know, the skill sets that are required within the behavioral health field, whether that is psychology, counseling, social work, or youth work. And fundamentally that is going to be the basis for any effective program even here in the United States.

Mr. KEATING. Yes. There are some studies, I believe, that actually mention the value and the multiplier effect and the effectiveness, the efficacy of issues of this nature more in the hands in the involvement of women, particularly mothers. They are often the first educators of their children. They are often the first people who can spot some of the signs of radicalization themselves.

How important is it to engage women particularly and empower women in this effort?

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Is your question directed at me, Chairman?

Mr. KEATING. It would be.

Ms. RAMALINGAM. I can take it if—

Mr. KEATING. But others can chime in, but particularly you, yes.

Ms. RAMALINGAM. Great. Great. I am happy to start.

You are absolutely right that family members in particular, they play a crucial role here, and many of the programs that were set up in Europe and which are now starting to develop in the U.S. are actually family counseling programs. These are programs for, you know, the fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers of people who are at risk who are likely to be the first ones to spot the signs. So those are very important nodes which can help us pull people back who are at risk.

Women play an important role in that. I would also want to mention that we tend to focus our prevention efforts on men. I think there is an assumption here that men are the ones that are at greatest risk. We have increasing evidence to show that women are also involved in these movements, sometimes at high volumes. In particular, some of Moonshot's research has found that in the United States 25 percent of people who are engaged in White supremacy content online are women, who self-identify as women. So, you know, we cannot ignore women in our prevention programs, and we do need to ensure we are building programs that are fit to serve women. And I just want to make that point as well.

Mr. KEATING. Okay. One last thought and then we will conclude. You know, the European Union and India discussed multiple ways to evaluate security and strategic partnerships recently. They included sanctions as a part of this as well. Just any quick comments from our panel regarding how the U.S. or the U.S. and our transatlantic allies together can engage more regional partners outside our own coalition, and what financial tools do we have to try and thwart this?

Dr. LEVITT. I will just jump in as the former Treasury official on the panel to say we have great financial tools at our disposal. My concern is that they tend to be seen as a panacea. And the past few years, they have been used on their own when they were always meant to be used in tandem with other tools.

Diplomatic counterterrorism is a real thing, and we need to be doing a lot more of it. If we do more of it, we will be able to bring in more regional allies, and we will be able to work with them and our other allies, including the Europeans, on issues including, but not limited to the use of sanctions and other financial tools.

The only other thing I would like to say answering the previous question is, you know, the panel hears about countering global violent extremism. Throughout the panel, we have basically broken it down, but we haven't made it clear. There is CVE at home, and then there is addressing the conflicts driving extremism abroad.

I am reminded, and I just looked it up. In 2017, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence wrote one its global trends reports. And what it was talking about, what would significantly impact the future direction of the terrorist threat, it said, the resolution or continuation of the many intra and interState conflicts cur-

rently underway, most importantly, the Syrian war, but also the conflicts in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, the Sahel, Somalia, Yemen, and elsewhere will determine the intensity and geography of future violence.

Our transatlantic cooperation and helping each other counter violent extremism within one another's borders is that really good. It is not so great, and it needs improvement on working together to solve big problems abroad.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. On that note, I think it just underscores one of the fundamental lessons we learned today through this hearing is that this is a dynamic problem, and it requires a dynamic approach.

Merely, as you mentioned, throwing sanctions at the issue, it could be one tool in the toolbox, but it is certainly not something to accomplish the goals that we want.

Prevention, involvement, understanding, how this happens, the fact that this is ideological in so many instances, and we have to be aware of that, and be aware of how to effectively deal with that are all things you brought up in your testimony today as well as the overarching theme that we have a tremendous advantage here in the U.S. of having a coalition, an historic coalition, particularly with our European allies and our transatlantic partners to deal with this.

So thank you for your participation. I think it was extraordinarily important, and the perspective was correct, so I appreciate your involvement here today.

I will advise the members they have 5 days to submit statements and extraneous material and questions for the record subject to the length limitations on the rules.

I want to thank the members who participated during such a difficult time of having concurrent votes for their interest and their questions. And with that, I call this hearing adjourned. Thank you all.

[Whereupon, at 4:09 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]

APPENDIX

JOINT COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON EUROPE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT, AND
CYBER**

William R. Keating (D-MA), Chair

**SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND
GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM**

Ted Deutch (D-FL), Chair

September 23, 2021

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, to be held jointly by the Subcommittee on Europe, Energy, the Environment, and Cyber and the Subcommittee on the Middle East, North Africa, and Global Counterterrorism via Cisco WebEx (and available live on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>):

DATE: Thursday, September 23, 2021

TIME: 2:00 p.m., EDT

SUBJECT: Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism

WITNESS: Mr. Olivier Onidi
Deputy Director-General
Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs
European Commission

Ms. Vidhya Ramalingam
Founder & CEO
Moonshot

Mr. Raffaello Pantucci
Senior Associate Fellow
Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)

Matthew Levitt, Ph.D.

Fromer-Wexler Fellow
Director, Jeanette and Eli Reinhard Program on Counterterrorism and
Intelligence
The Washington Institute for Near East Policy

By Direction of the Chair

To fill out this form online: Either use the tab key to travel through each field or mouse click each line or within blue box. Type in information.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Note: Red boxes with red type will NOT print.

MINUTES OF SUBCOMMITTEE ON Europe, Energy, the Environment and Cyber and Middle East, North Africa and Global Counterterrorism Issues HEARING

Day Thursday Date 09/23/2021 Room Cisco Webex

Starting Time 2:11 pm Ending Time 4:09 pm

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

William R. Keating, Ted Deutch

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

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To select a box, mouse click it, or tab to it and use the enter key to select. Another click on the same box will deselect it.

TITLE OF HEARING:

Transatlantic Cooperation on Countering Global Terrorism and Violent Extremism

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

See Attached

NON-SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: (Mark with an * if they are not members of full committee.)

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: (List any statements submitted for the record.)

*Mr. Olivier Onidi's Testimony
Ms. Vidhya Ramalingam's Testimony
Mr. Raffaello Pantucci's Testimony
Dr. Matthew Levitt's Testimony*

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 4:09 pm

Clear Form

Note: If listing additional witnesses not included on hearing notice, be sure to include title, agency, etc.

Benjamin Cooper
Subcommittee Staff Associate

WHEN COMPLETED: Please print for subcommittee staff director's signature and make at least one copy of the signed form. A signed copy is to be included with the hearing/markup transcript when ready for printing along with a copy of the final meeting notice (both will go into the appendix). The signed original, with a copy of the final meeting notice attached, goes to full committee. An electronic copy of this PDF file may be saved to your hearing folder, if desired.

JOINT HEARING: HOUSE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EUROPE, ENERGY, THE ENVIRONMENT AND CYBER SUBCOMMITTEE

MIDDLE EAST, NORTH AFRICA, AND GLOBAL COUNTERTERRORISM SUBCOMMITTEE

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