

**“A Line in the Sand: Assessing Dangerous Threats to Our Nation’s
Borders”**

**Hearing Before
The U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management**

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Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Keating, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. The subject matter of this hearing and of the Subcommittee's Report titled, "A Line in the Sand: Confronting Crime, Violence and Terror at the Southwest Border," are unquestionably issues of national importance. Your sustained focus on these challenges, especially at a time when the U.S. and global economies dominate the headlines, is to be appreciated. My own written remarks address the hemispheric threat and its implications for the U.S. homeland; and include proposed recommendations for action to meet the threat, moving forward. I think you will find that our respective conceptualizations of the threat and the means and methods of combating it, as reflected in your Report ("A Line in the Sand") and in my statement below, are in sync and complement one another. Indeed, we are clearly jointly concerned about Iran/Hezbollah's presence in the Americas, the relationship of same with Mexican drug cartels, the potential for future and more nefarious such cooperation and collaboration, and the significant sources of threat and already-existing challenges in this country that emanate from the U.S.-Mexico border—just to name a few points of agreement and intersection. Likewise, a mix of both strategic and tactical steps are needed in order to address the threat ecosystem more effectively, including an approach that encourages and leverages enhanced interagency cooperation.

Defending U.S. Borders: Evolution of Thought and Threat

The exploitation of American borders—by land, sea, and air—has long been of profound concern to U.S. authorities and the general public alike. Consider the Millennium plot of December 1999 in which Ahmed Ressaam sought to enter the United States from Canada by car in a plot to blow up Los Angeles International Airport. Thanks to the vigilance of an astute U.S. border official at the tip of the spear, the attack did not materialize. Such a mixture of luck and skill saved the day in that case; but what is needed is a system that offers defense in-depth and that keeps the threat as far away as possible from the Continental United States in the first place. This is all the more challenging an end-state to achieve at a time in history when the nature of borders has changed, due in part to technological advances. Indeed, to the extent that our borders ever created watertight compartments, they are now more porous in character than ever. Consider cyberspace, where traditional conceptions of border security simply do not translate. In a domain without traditional physical checkpoints, our adversaries can cloak themselves in anonymity and seek to do us harm, often without tipping off the target or stepping foot into that country. Though the United States has begun to direct substantial resources toward redressing its vulnerabilities in this area, much remains to be done. Correspondingly, we have invested much in aviation security and in supporting measures and tools such as travel data and intelligence. While an imperfect situation, we have made substantial strides over time in terms of shoring up our posture in these areas. However, the task at hand must not be underestimated, especially because the threat also emanates from within. Over fifty "homegrown" jihadist plots have been discovered since 9/11.

In addition to an evolution in the manner in which to think about borders, a separate but related phenomenon, not new but intensified, has occurred—a convergence of the forces of crime and terror. According to conventional thinking and analysis, terrorists (motivated by ideology) and criminals (motivated by money/profit) would not cooperate and collaborate. Why? Because criminals such as drug traffickers seek to do business, and associating with terrorists could

jeopardize that goal by drawing the full attention of U.S. (and other) law enforcement authorities dedicated to counterterrorism. While terrorists and criminals may have undertaken their operations separately in past and often continue to do so at present, there are today significant and concerning counter-examples. Consider the thwarted 2011 plot, sponsored by Iran, to assassinate the Saudi Arabian ambassador to the United States, with Mexican drug cartel hit-men serving as the hired killers. This case is in fact indicative of a broader trend in which terrorists are turning increasingly to crime/criminals and criminals such as drug cartels are increasingly turning to terrorist tactics. Grisly news reports from Mexico in recent months, that highlight beheadings and other brutal violence perpetrated by the cartels, have offered ample evidence of the latter proposition. As to the former, we have seen foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) turn more and more to drug trafficking, kidnapping, and organized crime in order to support terrorist activities. This phenomenon is best exemplified by Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and the larger Sahel region of Africa, as well as the Haqqani Network (HQN) operating in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). For its part, HQN has effectively become a state within a state, usurping the traditional prerogatives of government. One of the upshots of the power that HQN, AQIM, and other terrorist groups have accumulated (at the expense of government authorities) is that the lucrative Golden Crescent—the drug routes from Asia/Africa into Europe—is firmly under their control.

For the U.S. homeland, this convergence of the forces of crime and terror is particularly concerning because the pipelines and pathways used to smuggle drugs into this country can also be used to smuggle in people (including terrorists) and weapons. Put another way, smuggling is smuggling is smuggling. Terrorists can tap the distribution networks and routes that drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) have established. The reach of DTOs is expansive and stretches throughout the Continental United States. An old joke, which still serves as a stark reminder of the dangers that we face today, is that the easiest way to smuggle a tactical nuclear weapon into the United States is to wrap it in a bale of marijuana. The threat picture grows yet more complex and vivid when we contemplate further just which terrorist organizations are now heavily involved in the drug trade. Consider Lebanese Hezbollah (Iran's chief proxy) which has expanded its illegal narcotics activities from its original foothold in the Bekaa Valley to the Tri-Border Area of South America, West Africa, and Europe. With this kind of reach, Hezbollah is well poised to do Iran's dirty work (or its own)—including in the Americas.

Relationships between and among terrorist groups are also becoming more overt and strategic in nature. There exists substantial evidence of cooperation and collaboration between and among groups with U.S. and Western targets evermore in their sights and aspirations. These terrorist groups include al Qaeda affiliates in Yemen, the Sahel and Somalia, as well as jihadist forces based elsewhere in Africa, Pakistan, and beyond. Despite U.S. and allied counterterrorism efforts that have yielded a good measure of success, these terror affiliates remain committed to carrying forward the mantle of bin Laden, and to exploiting both ungoverned and under-governed spaces. The latter tactic pre-dated the Arab Spring, but evidenced reinforcement and magnification thereafter. The tragic violence in Benghazi, directed against U.S. personnel and interests (and those of allies) further proves this point. As the Commander of U.S. Africa Command, General Carter Ham, stated earlier this week, "...it

appears to me very likely that some of the terrorists who participated in the attack in Benghazi have at least some linkages to AQIM.”¹

Spotlight: Hezbollah, Iran, and the Americas

There is thus little cause for complacency as toxic forces converge and cooperate in multiple spots across the globe, more than ever before. As the former head of operations for the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) testified earlier this year, both Iran’s Quds Force and Hezbollah “are now heavily involved in the global drug trade....Their participation in that effort presents them with myriad opportunities with which to build their terrorist and criminal capacity in the Western Hemisphere and elsewhere.”² Likewise, the Commander of U.S. Southern Command, General Douglas M. Fraser, has observed convergence—based on convenience—between terrorist and criminal organizations in the Tri-Border Area of Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.³ Unfortunately, these developments are matched by a disturbing (even if understandable) shortcoming on the U.S. side. For the past decade, U.S. Government analysts have focused on Al Qaeda, resulting in a lesser reservoir of U.S. intelligence on, and perhaps even a blind spot, regarding Hezbollah and their networks and activities.⁴

As an astute analyst of these issues, Matthew Levitt, has observed, Hezbollah’s “expansion into the South American narcotics industry began in the early-1980s but grew significantly in the following decades.” Hezbollah now derives “major funding” from these activities and “facilitates drug trafficking for other smuggling networks, including those of the Colombian terrorist group FARC.” Former assistant administrator for intelligence in the DEA, Anthony Placido, reinforced the point in 2010 testimony noting, “Drug trafficking organizations based in the tri-border area have ties to radical Islamic organizations such as Hizbullah.” And as Levitt writes further, “Over time, Hizbullah leveraged its criminal ties to support operational objectives, including trading drugs for intelligence from Arab-Israeli (and sometimes Jewish-Israeli) criminals and...moving weapons or explosives through drug smuggling networks.” Cross-fertilization of forces is also noted in the 2011 State Department *Country Reports on Terrorism*, which underscored that

¹ “US Commander: Libya attack linked to Qaeda in Maghreb,” *Reuters* (November 14, 2012). <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/us-commander-libya-attack-linked-to-qaeda-in-maghreb>

² Joby Warrick, “In Iran, drug trafficking soars as sanctions take bigger bite” *The Washington Post* (November 1, 2012) citing Michael Braun. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/in-iran-drug-trafficking-soars-as-sanctions-take-bigger-bite/2012/10/31/12ff0930-1d81-11e2-b647-bb1668e64058_story.html

³ Statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee (March 6, 2012) <http://www.armed-services.senate.gov/statemnt/2012/03%20March/Fraser%2003-13-12.pdf>

⁴ Frank J. Cilluffo, Sharon Cardash, and Michael Downing, “Is America’s view of Iran and Hezbollah dangerously out of date?” *FoxNews.com* (March 20, 2012).

<http://www.foxnews.com/opinion/2012/03/20/is-americas-view-iran-and-hezbollah-dangerously-out-date/>

“ideological sympathizers in South America and the Caribbean continued to provide financial and ideological support to...terrorist groups in the Middle East and South Asia.”⁵

These developments draw warranted attention to the risk posed by hybrid threats, where an adversary acquires from a third party the necessary access, resources, or know-how needed to attack or threaten a target—all of which could be used strategically against the United States. Against this background, the New York City Police Department has expanded its decade-plus focus on core al Qaeda (AQ), affiliates, and the homegrown threat (inspired by AQ), to include Iran and Hezbollah.⁶ In doing so, NYPD continues its efforts to build a robust and independent counterterror posture for the City of New York. In turn, the Los Angeles Police Department recently elevated the Government of Iran and its proxies, notably Hezbollah, to a Tier One threat.⁷

Clearly, much as we might wish state-sponsored terrorism to have fallen off the map, it has not. Indeed, both the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center and the Director of National Intelligence have underscored concern about Iran and their proxies, suggesting respectively in recent testimony that “Iran remains the foremost state sponsor of terrorism”⁸; and that Iran is “now more willing to conduct an attack in the United States.”⁹ Concern about Iran and its proxies, as reflected above, is all the more disturbing given Iran’s ongoing drive to achieve nuclear weapons capability, and the recent statement of Lebanese Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah to the effect that there will be no distinction drawn between Israel and the United States in terms of retaliation, should Israel attack Iran to halt its progress toward the nuclear goal: “If Israel targets Iran, America bears responsibility.”¹⁰

Note that Hezbollah’s nexus with criminal activity is greater than that of any other terrorist group. In the United States, there were 16 arrests of Hezbollah activists in 2010 based on Joint Terrorism Task Force investigations in Philadelphia, New York and Detroit. And the organization has attempted to obtain equipment in the United States including Stinger missiles,

⁵ Matthew Levitt, “Hizbullah narco-terrorism: A growing cross-border threat” *IHS Defense, Risk and Security Consulting* (September 2012) citing Placido, and State Department.
http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/uploads/Levitt20120900_1.pdf

⁶ Testimony of Mitchell D. Silber before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security *Iran, Hezbollah, and the Threat to the Homeland* (March 21, 2012)
<http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony-Silber.pdf>

⁷ Cilluffo, Cardash, and Downing. “Is America’s view of Iran and Hezbollah dangerously out of date?”

⁸ Matthew G. Olsen, “Understanding the Homeland Threat Landscape” *Hearing before the House Committee on Homeland Security* (July 25, 2012)
<http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/Testimony-Olsen.pdf>

⁹ James R. Clapper, “Unclassified Statement for the Record on the Worldwide Threat Assessment of the US Intelligence Community for the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence” (January 31, 2012)
<http://intelligence.senate.gov/120131/clapper.pdf>

¹⁰ Reuters, “Nasrallah: Iran could strike US bases if attacked” *The Jerusalem Post* (September 3, 2012)
<http://www.jpost.com/IranianThreat/News/Article.aspx?id=283706>

M-4 rifles and night vision equipment.¹¹ These links, including with drugs and cartels, generate new possibilities for outsourcing, and new networks that can facilitate terrorist travel, logistics, recruitment and operations. After all, the distribution routes are the same regardless of what is being moved illicitly. Authorities have noted significant terrorist interest in tactics, techniques and procedures used to smuggle people and drugs into the United States from Mexico. According to Texas State Homeland Security Director, Steve McCraw, Hezbollah operatives were captured trying to cross the border in September 2007.¹² Thus, the old assumption that Hezbollah and others would avoid linking up with drug traffickers, in order to avoid drawing attention (and potentially heat) from law enforcement officials, no longer applies.

Instead we have seen a troubling hybridization and convergence of such forces, pursuant to which “terrorists look to criminals” and vice versa, while “criminals emulate businesses.” Regrettably, as noted more than a decade ago, “The linkage between terrorists and narcotics is strong, and getting stronger.... Suffice it to say narcotics provide a substantial source of funding and have deepened the connection between terrorists and organized crime. Kidnapping is also nothing new to terrorists. They have been taking hostages since day one to gain media attention and ransom money. But there is a new twist—more and more terrorists take hostages for money—not for publicity. Kidnapping has become big business. The \$64,000 question is how much money is going into their coffers to further their terrorist campaigns and how many of these organizations are transforming into outright criminal enterprises.”¹³ The cross-walk between terror and crime may therefore be murky. By way of example, “Abu Sayyaf is a good example of an ideologically driven group that have transformed into a criminal enterprise.”¹⁴

Also noteworthy, particularly with an eye to the future, is the growing activity among the Bolivarian axis states of Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela—and between them and external actors, including Iran and Russian organized crime.¹⁵ Such is another dangerous variation on the theme of convergence and cooperation between state and non-state actors with postures that are hostile to the West generally and to the United States in particular. For

¹¹ Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Department of Homeland Security, “Indictment charges 4 with conspiracy to support Hezbollah 6 others charged with related crimes,” *Press Release* (November 24, 2009). <http://www.ice.gov/news/releases/0911/091124philadelphia.htm>

¹² “Terrorists have been arrested on the border, security chief says,” *Associated Press* (September 13, 2007).

¹³ Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Subcommittee on National Security, Veterans Affairs, and International Relations (April 3, 2001). http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/testimony4.3.01_cilluffo.pdf

¹⁴ Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on the Judiciary, Subcommittee on Crime (December 13, 2000). http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/testimony12.13.00_cilluffo.pdf

¹⁵ Douglas Farah, “Transnational Organized Crime, Terrorism, and Criminalized States in Latin America: An Emerging Tier-One National Security Priority” *U.S. Army War College Strategic Studies Institute Monograph* (August 2012).

example, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad established the IRISL (Islamic Republic of Iran Shipping Lines) Group to facilitate and obscure activity between the two countries and third party criminal enterprises—including drug trafficking organizations. Although the IRISL Group and its offshoots are on the radar of the United States and its allies (having already been blacklisted by the Treasury Department), this is a threat that bears careful and active watching, in order to remain ahead of the curve and on proactive rather than reactive footing.¹⁶

Spillover effects from Mexico are also in evidence in the United States, up to and including the northeast and northwest regions of this country, where Mexican drug trafficking organizations have established a presence. As noted in the Subcommittee's Report, "A Line in the Sand," Mexican cartels now have an established presence in more than 1,000 U.S. cities. If not challenged by action on our part, there is no logical reason why we should expect that number to decrease. In fact, it will grow. Narco-trafficking in Mexico is big business, and the Mexican drug cartels have become so powerful that they threaten, if not effectively supplant, the state in certain parts of the country. If we continue to observe an increase in the strength and position of the cartels in Mexico, we should expect to observe an increase in their reach into the United States. Alone, the drug threat poses a serious threat to the U.S. That threat becomes truly grave, however, when you consider its potential to move beyond narcotics. Mexico now grapples with a triple threat— a mixture of crime, terrorist tactics and insurgency—that is at once adaptive, lethal and determined.¹⁷ Cartels and other criminals there have adopted the violent tactics, techniques and procedures of terrorists. Meanwhile terrorist groups have undertaken a range of illicit activities. This convergence of forces with differing motivations (profit, ideology, etc.) has already yielded a case in which a "controversial imam" was smuggled across America's southwestern border by smugglers based in Mexico.¹⁸ And as the Subcommittee's Report ("A Line in the Sand") notes, intelligence from the 2011 raid on bin Laden's compound found evidence that bin Laden wanted to exploit Mexican smuggling routes into the United States. The concern among U.S. security and intelligence officials is that this type of activity could become more institutionalized, for instance if major Mexican drug cartels were to ally and partner with terrorists. Recall the plot targeting Ambassador Al-Jubeir.

Mexico, however, is not the only avenue of approach. If you were to take a map of the Americas and trace the points of origin, transit routes, and destinations of drug trafficking and other illicit smuggling operations, you would see a spider-web of conduits—including some that pass through U.S. territory. The DEA has noted that Puerto Rico is becoming a principal entry point for drug trafficking into the United States. From the perspective of the cartels and

¹⁶ Douglas Farah, "Hezbollah in Latin America: Implications for U.S. Security" Testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security (July 2011).

http://www.strategycenter.net/research/pubID.249/pub_detail.asp

Sandra Warmoth, "Iran's Expanding Footprint in Latin America." *Small Wars Journal* (May 2012).

<http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/irans-expanding-footprint-in-latin-america>

¹⁷ Sharon L. Cardash, Frank J. Cilluffo, and Bert B. Tussing, *Mexico and the Triple Threat* (October 20, 2011). http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/issuebrief_MexicoTripleThreat.pdf

¹⁸ Richard Marosi, "Controversial Muslim cleric is arrested while sneaking into the U.S." *Los Angeles Times* (January 27, 2011). <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/jan/27/local/la-me-border-cleric-20110127>

terrorists, Puerto Rico is a perfect target and opportunity. As a U.S. border, the island is under-protected, receiving too little resources and attention—a fact evidenced by a growing drug-related murder rate (more than five times the national average); and the fact that for the second time in three years, major smuggling rings were recently uncovered at San Juan's Luis Munoz Marin International Airport. These rings were responsible for shipments to New York, New Jersey, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Massachusetts; and highlight the fact that once drugs, weapons, individuals, or materials make it to the island, they are within the United States — just hours from the major population centers of the East Coast.¹⁹

In addition, we are also witnessing growing hybrid threats in the Caribbean. At times, the hybrid threats emanate from a blending of criminal activity and community resources. Witness the case of the Jamaican drug lord Christopher “Dudus” Coke. Coke rose to his position after the death of his father, a gang leader with considerable influence in the Jamaican Labour Party. In Jamaica, “Dudus” Coke controlled the Tivoli Gardens neighborhood of Kingston and exercised considerable influence within Jamaican populations both on and off the island. Eventually Coke leveraged this community of influence to establish a global trafficking ring that connected Kingston, Miami, and New York. Before being convicted earlier this year in New York, he pleaded guilty to charges that included the trafficking of more than three tons of marijuana and thirty pounds of cocaine; Coke effectively ran a state within a state—a fact that landed him on the Department of Justice’s list of most dangerous drug traffickers.²⁰

At other times, the hybrid threat represents a blending of criminal activity with terrorist narrative and incitement. For example, Jamaica is also home to Abdullah al-Faisal, a prominent jihadist imam who preaches violence and calls for the murder of Americans, Jews and Hindus. A jihadi “rock star” on YouTube and other internet sites, al-Faisal inspired Zacarias Moussaoui, Richard Reid (the failed shoe bomber), Jermaine Lindsay (one of the 7/7 bombers that struck London), and Faisal Shahzad (who sought to detonate a car bomb in Times Square); and likely others

¹⁹ CNN Wire Staff, “Drug raid targets baggage handlers, airline workers in Puerto Rico” *CNN* (June 7, 2012). <http://www.cnn.com/2012/06/06/us/puerto-rico-airport-arrests/index.html>

²⁰ “Manhattan US Attorney Charges Jamaican-Based Drug Kingpin with Narcotics and Firearms Trafficking Crimes.” Press Release. US Attorney for the Southern District of New York. (2009) <http://www.justice.gov/usao/nys/pressreleases/August09/cokechristophermichaelidictmentpr.pdf>. United States of America v. Christopher Michael Coke. Sealed Indictment S15 07 Cr. 971 (RPP). (2009) <http://www.americanthinker.com/Christopher%20Coke%20Indictment.pdf>. Kareem Fahim, “Jamaica Strains to Fill Void Left by Gang Bosses” *The New York Times* (2010). http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/01/world/americas/01jamaica.html?_r=1&ref=christopher_coke. Carlin DeGuerin Miller, “Christopher “Dudus” Coke Extradited, Pleads Not Guilty in US Court” *CBS News* (2010). http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504083_162-20008897-504083.html Richard Esposito, Mark Schone, & Luis Martinez. “US Report: Jamaican Prime Minister Is ‘Known Criminal Affiliate’ of Hunted Drug Lord.” *ABC News* (2010). <http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/jamaica-christopher-dudus-coke-escaped-security-forces-assault/story?id=10737428>. Jason Horowitz, “Renewed Questions about Firm’s Involvement in Jamaican Extradition Case” *The Washington Post* (2010). <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/05/26/AR2010052604233.html>. Ed Pilkington, “Christopher ‘Dudus’ Coke handed 23-year US jail term for drug trafficking” *The Guardian* (2012). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2012/jun/08/christopher-dudus-coke-jail-term>.

too.²¹ It is also worth noting the Caribbean ties present in the 2007 plot to bomb the jet fuel artery at New York's JFK airport. Two of the perpetrators were from Trinidad and Tobago, but more importantly, the plotters repeatedly travelled to Trinidad for moral and financial support from the extremist Muslim group Jamaat al-Muslimeen.²²

This last point brings variants of the threat back to and within the United States, where bin Laden's ideology and narrative continues to inspire a small but dangerous constituency. As indicated above, well over fifty homegrown U.S. jihadi terrorism plots have been discovered since 9/11. In addition, as foreign fighters return to their respective homelands (U.S. included) battle-hardened and armed with Western passports—ten feet tall in the eyes of those who admire their exploits—these returned fighters pose a direct threat to Western security given their familiarity with potential targets they may select to attack. Where foreign fighters are concerned, so-called “bridge figures” are of special importance, as they ensure that the fighter pool is replenished, by helping to inspire, radicalize, and motivate. These figures exude charisma, and exhibit cultural and linguistic fluency as well as other skills that propel them to positions of leadership, guidance and prominence. This was the role Abdullah al-Faisal played.²³ He and others like him, illustrate both the actuality and potential for the Caribbean to serve as a threat gateway to the United States. A concerted and comprehensive U.S. effort to counter our adversaries' narrative is the largest missing dimension of our counterterrorism statecraft.

The Cyber Threat—which knows no borders:

The threat has also taken hold in the cyber domain, where our adversaries may be surfing in the wake of “Anonymous” and other such groups in order to learn from and perhaps also exploit their actions. Here, foreign states—China, Russia, North Korea, Iran—are our primary concern. What Iran may lack in cyber capability (notwithstanding heavy investment in that area) it makes up for in intent. Together with cash, Iran and others who wish to do us harm can go far, simply by buying or renting the cyber weapons and tools they need or seek. Bear in mind that cyber threats manifest in nanoseconds. Protecting critical infrastructure and building resilience in relation to it, should therefore be at the top of our priority list. Consider, for example, “reports that Iranian and Venezuelan diplomats in Mexico were involved in planned cyber-attacks

²¹ “Profile: Sheikh Abdullah al-Faisal” *BBC News* (2007).

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/6692243.stm. Madeleine Gruen, “Abdullah al-Faisal: Extremist Ideologue with Influence in the West.” *NEFA Backgrounder*. New York, NY; The NEFA Foundation. (2009) http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/nefa_alfaisal1009.pdf

²² Cara Buckley and William K. Rashbaum, “4 Men Accused of Plot to Blow Up Kennedy Airport Terminals and Fuel Lines” *The New York Times*. (2007).

<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/03/nyregion/03plot.html> Jerome P. Bjelopera, “American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat.” Washington, DC; Congressional Research Service. (2011) <http://www.fas.org/sqp/crs/terror/R41416.pdf>.

²³ Frank J. Cilluffo, Jeffrey B. Cozzens, and Magnus Ranstorp, *Foreign Fighters: Trends, Trajectories & Conflict Zones* (October 1, 2010). http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/report_foreignfighters501.pdf

against U.S. targets, including nuclear power plants.”²⁴ The scenario is especially concerning, keeping in mind that Hurricane Sandy and other recent storms have highlighted this country’s shortcomings in terms of resilience. Mother Nature may be a formidable adversary, but just imagine the level of damage and destruction that a determined and creative enemy could wreak.

Recommendations and Potential Solutions:

To fight back effectively against the complex multidimensional threat outlined above, a multidimensional response that incorporates law enforcement, intelligence, diplomatic, and other measures, is needed.

- *Mexico’s Triple Threat and U.S. Spillover.* There is more that the United States could do in terms of border security and enforcement, with the aim of tackling spillover effects of Mexico’s triple threat of crime, terrorist tactics, and insurgency. Whether it is drugs or weapons being trafficked, the illicit enterprise operates like a business. This presents opportunities for U.S. and counterpart authorities to exploit for the purpose of counter-attack. For example, careful and comprehensive mapping of the movement of weapons and funds by Mexican drug trafficking organizations operating with the United States would generate additional opportunities to disrupt and seize flows of arms and money. As a prerequisite to capitalizing on these potential opportunities, we would need to develop the intelligence needed to better track, locate, and seize cash and weapons before they reach the border—at which point the task of intercepting them is much harder since efforts to conceal are then at their peak.²⁵

In addition to this type of painstaking and patient work that supports operations, we must also do the hard strategic thinking required to further develop a comprehensive—meaning multidimensional and multi-instrument—plan to work with Mexico to help create and reinforce the institutional and social foundations and developments needed to achieve strategic success in the long run. On this there is, perhaps, a window of opportunity. On December 1st, President-elect Enrique Peña Nieto of Mexico will be sworn in. Although Nieto’s campaign promises to lower the level of drug-related violence gave rise to concerns about his willingness to tackle the threat posed by the cartels, his appointment of retired Colombian police chief General Oscar Naranjo as a security advisor suggests that Nieto is committed to a broad strategic fight against the cartels. Naranjo is a veteran of Colombia’s drug war and led that country’s intelligence efforts against the cartels. President-elect Nieto seems intent on bringing the lessons

²⁴ Shaun Waterman, “U.S. authorities probing alleged cyberattack plot by Venezuela, Iran” *The Washington Times* (December 13, 2011). <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/dec/13/us-probing-alleged-cyberattack-plot-iran-venezuela/?page=all>

²⁵ Cardash, Cilluffo, and Tussing, *Mexico and the Triple Threat*.

learned from success in Colombia (efforts this country supported) to Mexico.²⁶ As we did in Colombia, we must work with our Mexican allies, as well as allies across Central and South America, and the Caribbean, to combat this threat and strengthen regional security writ large.

This undertaking will be especially challenging at a time of domestic and international economic turbulence and restraint. Although policy without resources is rhetoric, we must try to work smarter and better. Strategy and doctrine in Mexico, in the United States, and in the region, must evolve and keep pace with the triple threat that is lethal and determined. Until our thinking ripens across the board, so as to lay the groundwork for a posture that is powerfully suited to the threat climate the United States, Mexico, and our regional allies will continue to play catch-up to the mix of forces at play. The challenge is further magnified because facts on the ground will continue to change and there will no doubt be other important developments that shake up the equation moving forward. Against this background, the best and most effective thing that we can do at this point is increase our awareness through better region-wide intelligence and analysis. We must have a rich picture of what is happening in the Americas and the Caribbean. We must be able to look beyond our own borders.

- *Iran/Hezbollah.* Disruption should be our goal here, though Iran and its proxies are no doubt expecting as much. Keeping eyes and ears open at home and abroad to glean indications and warnings (I&W) of attack will be fundamental, as will outreach to and partnership with state and local authorities and communities, where the rubber meets the road. Searching for I&W will require fresh thinking that identifies and pursues links and patterns not previously established by U.S. officials. In part, this entails hitting the beat hard, with local police tapping informants and known criminals for leads—bearing in mind the interconnections between Iran/Hezbollah and gangs/cartels. As criminal and terrorist networks increasingly support and reinforce one another, the post-9/11 shift of U.S. law enforcement resources away from drugs and thugs toward counterterrorism may be in need of some recalibration, to better serve both counterterrorist and counter-narcotics aims.

At minimum, red-teaming and the production of additional threat assessments should be pursued, to include modalities of attack (such as cyber, see more below) and potential consequences. The upside of today's grim operating presumptions, including the perception that the United States is fair game as subject of attack, is that the intersection of threat vectors (terrorists, drug traffickers, etc.) provides additional opportunities to U.S. intelligence and law enforcement authorities to exploit for collection and other purposes.²⁷

²⁶ Steven Dudley, "Can Colombian expert reform Mexico's troubled police force?" *The Christian Science Monitor* (July 13, 2012). <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Americas/Latin-America-Monitor/2012/0713/Can-Colombian-expert-reform-Mexico-s-troubled-police-force>

²⁷ Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence; and Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,

- *Counter-Radicalization in a Borderless World.* Addressing specific outbreaks of violent Islamist extremism will not prevent its virulent spread—including to and among Americans (“homegrown” terrorist cases)—unless the underlying extremist ideology is exposed, unpacked, dissected, and combated. Government agencies currently involved in various aspects of the mission of combating violent Islamist extremism (CVIE) do not represent systemic failures so much as the complete lack of a system at all. Without clear interagency directives instructing how to distribute resources and coordinate aspects of the mission, individual and broader agency efforts are improvised. As a result, an inconsistent and haphazard approach to dealing with the force underlying today’s terrorist threat is all but guaranteed.

Counter-radicalization is an essential complement to counterterrorism. Elements of a cohesive national strategy could incorporate a range of approaches that have proven effective in other contexts. The power of negative imagery, as in a political campaign, could be harnessed to hurt our adversaries and further chip away at their appeal and credibility in the eyes of their peers, followers, and sympathizers. A sustained and systemic strategic communications effort aimed at exposing the hypocrisy of Islamists’ words versus their deeds could knock them off balance, as could embarrassing their leadership by bringing to light their seamy connections to criminal enterprises and drug trafficking organizations. Imagine the groundswell that could be achieved if the tragic attack on Pakistani teenager Malala Yousufzai, and the many others who have been similarly targeted by al Qaeda and the Taliban, were similarly recognized worldwide—and the impact of these incidents thus multiplied thousands-fold.

Brokering infighting within and between al Qaeda, its affiliates, and the broader jihadi orbit in which they reside, will damage violent Islamists’ capability to propagate their message and organize operations both at home and abroad. Locally administered programs are especially significant, as many of the solutions reside outside the U.S. government and will require communities policing themselves. In the last year or two, the United States has made some headway on these fronts, including through the efforts of the Department of State’s Office of Strategic Counterterrorism Communications—but we could do more and we could (and should) hit harder, especially when our adversaries are back on their heels. Indeed, now is the time to double down rather than ease up on the pressure. In short, we must encourage defectors, delegitimize and disaggregate our adversaries’ narrative, and above all, remember the victims.²⁸

- *Securing Cyberspace, the Borderless Domain.* Cyber threats manifest in nanoseconds. Our response measures must be almost as quick. This means developing and implementing an “active defense” capability to immediately attribute and counter attacks

Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies (April 26, 2012).
<http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/Iran%20Cyber%20Testimony%204.26.12%20Frank%20Cilluffo.pdf>

²⁸ Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (July 11, 2012). <http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/Testimony%20-%20SHSGAC%20Hearing%20-%202011%20July%202012.pdf>

and future threats in real-time. Despite multiple incidents that could have served as galvanizing events to shore up U.S. resolve to formulate and implement the changes that are needed, and not just within Government, we have yet to take those necessary steps. Officials in the homeland security community should therefore undertake contingency planning that incorporates attacks on U.S. infrastructure. At minimum, “red-teaming” and additional threat assessments are needed. The latter should include modalities of attack and potential consequences. Working together with DHS Intelligence and Analysis colleagues, the Department’s National Protection and Programs Directorate (NPPD) could and should do more in terms of threat and intelligence reporting, especially in relation to critical infrastructure, where DHS is well positioned to add real and unique value given the Department’s relationship with and responsibilities towards the private sector.

The United States should also develop and clearly articulate a cyber-deterrence strategy. Such a deterrence policy should apply generally, and also in a tailored manner that is actor/adversary-specific. A solid general posture could serve as an 80 percent solution, neutralizing the majority of threats before they manifest fully. This, in turn, would free up resources (human, capital, technological, etc.) to focus our limited resources and bandwidth on the high-end of the threat spectrum and on those which are most sophisticated and persistent. To operationalize these recommendations, we must draw lines in the sand. Preserving flexibility of U.S. response by maintaining some measure of ambiguity is useful, so long as we make parameters clear by laying down certain markers or selected redlines whose breach will not be tolerated. More investment needs to be made in our offensive capability as well, in order to support the foregoing proposals in terms of practice and at the level of principle (to signal a credible commitment). Cybersecurity by definition is transnational in nature and will require some level of transnational solutions, yet it must not be approached like an arms control treaty (i.e., attribution and verification are still a ways away).²⁹

It is my privilege to have been afforded the opportunity to tender the above thoughts for consideration by Congress and the next Administration. Thank you to both the Subcommittee and its staff for your leadership and hard work on the pressing issues before us today and covered in your Report, “A Line in the Sand.” I would be pleased to try to answer any questions that you may have.

²⁹ Statement of Frank J. Cilluffo before the U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Homeland Security (September 20, 2012). http://www.gwumc.edu/hspi/policy/testimony9.20.12_Cilluffo.pdf