**INTER-AMERICAN COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)**

TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OEA/Ser.L/X.2.21

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REMARKS BY MR. TIMOTHY POUNDS, DEPUTY COORDINATOR FOR

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE BUREAU OF COUNTERTERRORISM,

AT THE TWENTY-FIRST REGULAR SESSION OF THE INTER-AMERICAN

COMMITTEE AGAINST TERRORISM (CICTE)

October 8, 2021

Remarks by Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism Timothy Pounds

“As Delivered”

* I am pleased to join you for the 21st Regular Session of the Organization of American States’ Inter-American Committee Against Terrorism.
* As Secretary Almagro noted, we recently marked the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks. We honor the memory of the nearly 3,000 lives lost and countless others injured and mourn what we all lost on that horrific day.
* Terrorism remains a serious threat that is even more ideologically diverse and geographically diffuse than the threat we faced two decades ago.
* Al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and their affiliates still threaten peace and security in many parts of the world, and Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremism (or REMVE) is rapidly becoming one of the most pressing counterterrorism challenges facing the international community.
* We have made significant progress globally and in our own hemisphere. Key instruments such as the Inter-American Convention against Terrorism strengthen hemispheric cooperation to prevent and counter terrorism.
* It is important we remain focused and work together. This includes using all the tools at our disposal, such as fulfilling the obligations and commitments stipulated in UN Security Council Resolutions like 2396 to prevent terrorist travel, 2462 to counter terrorist financing, and 2341 to promote resilience to our critical infrastructures and soft targets.
* I’d like to now turn to our assessment of the relationship between criminal activity and terrorism and provide our views on effective practices and tools to combat these threats.

**Transnational Organized Crime and Terrorism**

* The United States has found that weak implementation of requirements for anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism create significant vulnerabilities in the international financial system. Many types of complicit institutions and illicit actors, including transnational organized crime networks and terrorists, exploit these vulnerabilities to raise funds through a range of criminal activities.
* For several terrorist organizations, including ISIS, the Haqqani Network, and Hizballah, criminal activity helps fund their organizations and operations. This includes resources received from supporters involved in their own criminal activity, as well as levies imposed on criminal activity that occurs in territories where they operate.
* Members of terrorist and transnational organized crime groups target the gaps of weak border infrastructure and continue to exploit with impunity porous and uncontrolled borders to traffic small arms and light weapons, ammunition and explosives, drugs, contraband, and human beings.
* Terrorists make use of forged and/or fraudulently obtained travel documents and visas, or abuse genuine travel documents of others, to cross international borders to conduct attacks or join extremist groups elsewhere.
* As travel normalizes and the global transportation sector seeks to rebound from the COVID-19 pandemic, we know that terrorists and organized criminal networks will again plan to move transnationally, looking for their next target or repositioning people, resources, and material.

**The U.S. Response**

* Considering the most effective approaches, the United States believes multilateral efforts and cooperation led by the United Nations and regional organizations including CICTE are among the best and most effective way to confront these threats and challenges. We appreciate the opportunity to share best practices and expertise in this forum.
* In July 2020, the United States formally joined the Inter-American Network Against Terrorism, formed under the auspices of CICTE. Seventeen OAS Member States have now signed on to work together to facilitate communication among our counterterrorism and law enforcement experts, including on designations and countering terrorist financing. I encourage all OAS Member States to also join and take advantage of this valuable tool.
* We appreciate that seven OAS Member States have established designation regimes, along with sanctions on Hizballah and other groups.  We continue to urge other countries to designate Hizballah as a terrorist organization in its entirety and to take steps to restrict the group’s activities in their countries.
* Passenger Name Record data, or PNR, is an invaluable screening tool to identify possible terrorists and transnational criminals and is an obligation for all UN Member States under Security Council Resolution 2396. We encourage countries to negotiate data sharing agreements that will allow them to collect, use, and retain PNR data on all international travelers in accordance with the ICAO’s Standards and Recommended Practices.
* To further assist countries in the implementation of this resolution, the United States – under the auspices of the Global Counterterrorism Forum –partnered with the UN to develop a Counterterrorism Watchlisting Toolkit. The Toolkit is intended to help countries and organizations build, operate, and maintain more efficient and effective watchlist and terrorist screening enterprises that will also greatly increase bilateral and multilateral sharing of terrorism screening information.
* CICTE is a steadfast partner in our collective counterterrorism efforts. In addition to partial funding for the Inter-American Network Against Terrorism, we also support a CICTE program to strengthen Member States’ capacity to detect, prevent, and mitigate threats to the aviation ecosystem, including insider threats, low and high technology threats, and national access controls.
* Relatedly, we look forward to continuing to work with the OAS to address the threat posed to civil aviation by Man-Portable Air Defense Systems in the hands of non-state actor groups.

**Conclusion**

* In closing, I would like to thank the Dominican Republic for its leadership over the past year and welcome the election of Guyana as the 2022 CICTE chair. Additionally, I would like to express my gratitude to Secretary General Almagro, CICTE Executive Secretary Alison Treppel, Deputy Executive Secretary Violanda Botet, and the CICTE Secretariat staff for all their hard work. Thank you.

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