

**Written Statement for Department of State, Bureau of Counterterrorism
Deputy Coordinator Joel Borkert Before the Senate Foreign Relations
Committee Subcommittee on Near East, South Asia, Central Asia, and
Counterterrorism February 3, 2026**

Chairman McCormick, Ranking Member Rosen, and members of the subcommittee, good afternoon. Thank you for inviting me to speak today, alongside my colleague from the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs.

I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the current terrorism landscape in North Africa, its impact on U.S. national security, and how the Department's Bureau of Counterterrorism is advancing the Trump Administration's security priorities. Our work includes supporting key diplomatic efforts and coordinating closely with partners across the Department and the broader interagency community.

The Trump Administration remains firmly committed to preventing major attacks on our homeland. We've made significant progress in strengthening safety and security both here and abroad, guided by the principle of Peace through Strength.

The Bureau of Counterterrorism plays a central role in shaping, implementing, and coordinating the Administration's counterterrorism efforts. We're deeply involved in interagency decisions and planning, and we work with international coalitions to address the evolving threat of transnational terrorism.

A big part of our mission is to help partner nations—especially those on the front lines—take effective action against shared terrorist threats. Our cooperation with these countries directly contributes to keeping Americans safe. We focus on holding state sponsors of terrorism accountable, securing our borders, and dismantling terrorist networks that threaten the United States.

Instability in the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa continue to challenge our partners in North Africa. While the terrorist threat in the region has decreased since the defeat of ISIS's territorial caliphate during the first Trump Administration, instability in the Middle East, Sub-Saharan, and West Africa has allowed ISIS and other groups to persist. Terrorist organizations exploit weak borders and the vast, sparsely populated areas of the Sahel to move fighters, weapons, and funds. Security challenges in places like Syria and Gaza, along with the ongoing activities of Iran's terrorist proxies, further fuel radicalization and instability in the region.

In this shifting environment, the Bureau of Counterterrorism remains focused on preventing these threats from reaching our homeland and on encouraging our

partners and allies to take greater responsibility for their own security and that of their region.

With U.S. support, North African countries have made real progress against terrorism over the past decade. Our partners often credit our foreign assistance programs for helping them achieve major law enforcement successes. For example, just last week, on January 22, 2026, U.S.-trained Tunisian security forces dismantled an ISIS-affiliated cell in Kasserine [KAS-uh-reen], eliminating all four members. This followed another successful operation by the Tunisian Ministry of Interior, which resulted in the death of a member of the ISIS affiliate Jund al-Khilafa [JOOND al-khi-LAH-fah] and the arrest of two more suspects. Additionally, having benefitted from training funded by the Bureau of Counterterrorism, Morocco is now taking ownership of the counterterrorism threat. Utilizing U.S. Government-provided curriculum, provided through our programming with Diplomatic Security, the Moroccans are training Sub-Saharan gendarmeries. As CT programming decreases in North Africa and countries like Morocco work with their neighbors to address localized threats, we are encouraging others in the region to follow Morocco's strong example.

Despite these successes, the threat remains. We support President Trump's unwavering commitment to protect Americans from terrorism—whether in North Africa or anywhere else these threats may arise. Here's how we do that:

First, we work to stop terrorists before they reach our borders. We help countries strengthen their visa systems, expand information sharing on travelers of concern, and improve border screening to detect and deter terrorist travel.

Last year, President Trump emphasized the importance of working with countries willing to improve information-sharing and identity management to address both terrorism and public safety risks. Through CT funded aviation security-focused programming, our Moroccan partners had a “perfect” TSA assessment of the Casablanca International Airport, which has multiple direct flights to the United States. CT will continue to engage our partners, providing targeted assistance to help them share information and screen travelers more effectively.

Second, our designation authorities allow us to cut off resources to dangerous terrorist groups. Recently, the U.S. government designated three Muslim Brotherhood chapters in Lebanon, Jordan, and Egypt as Foreign Terrorist Organizations or Specially Designated Global Terrorists. These designations give our federal partners new tools to counter terrorist activity and financing, constrain terrorist networks, and encourage behavior that advances U.S. national security interests.

Third, in line with President Trump's restoration of the Maximum Pressure Campaign on Iran, the Bureau is directing sanctions and other countermeasures, leading international initiatives, and mobilizing partners against the threat posed by Iran and its proxies. These efforts are making a difference. For example, the EU designated the IRGC as a terrorist organization last week. Paraguay became the first country in South America to designate the IRGC as a terrorist organization last year and expanded its designation of Hizballah. Since 2019, eighteen governments have taken action to ban, sanction, or restrict Hizballah, thanks to our efforts. We continue to work with North African countries to counter the threat from Iran and its proxies.

The Trump Administration has made it clear that counterterrorism will remain a top priority to keep our homeland safe. We will continue to work in a focused and targeted way, alongside partners who share our commitment to countering terrorist threats. North Africa is home to many capable and increasingly self-reliant partners, and we will keep working with them to identify and neutralize threats to U.S. interests and our shared security.

Thank you again, Chairman McCormick and Ranking Member Rosen, for the opportunity to be here. I look forward to your questions.