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BEFORE THE

SENATE FOREIGN RELATIONS COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NEAR EASTERN AND SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIAN AFFAIRS
U.S. SENATE

JAMMING THE IED ASSEMBLY LINE: IMPEDING THE FLOW OF AMMONIUM
NITRATE IN SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA

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Chairman Casey, distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting us to appear before you today on behalf of the men and women of the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO) and the Department of Defense (DoD).

As part of the President's Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy, we are in the midst of building a strategic partnership with Pakistan based on mutual interest, mutual trust, and mutual respect. President Obama has said that "America will remain a strong supporter of Pakistan's security and prosperity long after the guns have fallen silent, so that the great potential of its people can be unleashed." Our partnership with Pakistan is designed, in part, to accomplish our core regional goal of disrupting, dismantling, and destroying al-Qaida and its extremist affiliates. The U.S.-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, led by Secretary of State Clinton and her Pakistani counterpart, Foreign Minister Quereshi, has helped widen the scope of our partnership to include all spheres of bilateral cooperation. The Strategic Dialogue has helped elevate bilateral dialogue to advance this partnership, and has also provided a forum to discuss the tough issues that we must face as partners, from the transnational threat posed by extremist safe havens in Pakistan to the threat posed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Separate engagements at all levels of the Department of Defense – from Secretary Gates and Chairman Mullen, to the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy and at working levels throughout the Department – have begun to advance the dialogue with our Pakistani partners in combating this threat. Because of the sensitivity of much of our cooperation, as we are sure you understand, there are some aspects of our discussions with Pakistan on which DoD would need to brief Members in a classified setting. We would welcome that opportunity.

The importance of countering the threat posed by IEDs cannot be overstated. IEDs have been a major cause of U.S. military deaths in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and play a significant role in shaping today's combat environment. DoD has prioritized countering the IED threat, and it is a focus area for Secretary Gates. From the establishment of JIEDDO as the nexus of DoD counter-IED efforts, to the urgent prioritization of the development and acquisition of Mine-Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles and the establishment of a standing Senior Initiatives Group chaired by the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics and the Joint Staff Director of Operations, DoD has brought significant resources to bear in trying to counter the IED threat.

DoD responds to the IED problem from the military perspective, but we have increasingly recognized that interagency cooperation and cooperation with foreign governments are essential in addressing this complex issue. Active coordination with U.S. Government diplomatic, economic, intelligence, and military resources, as well as cooperation from foreign governments, is the key to a successful effort to defeat IED networks. We rely heavily on the Department of State to assist in this area.

IEDs continue to represent the most lethal threat to U.S. and Coalition forces in Afghanistan and to the success of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Homemade explosives (HME) and other bulk explosives are the enabling factors in nine of every ten IEDs in Afghanistan. IEDs have resulted in the deaths of 1,046 Coalition soldiers since January 2008, causing two of every three Coalition fatalities in Afghanistan. The challenge of interdicting this HME threat is considerable and must be addressed using a comprehensive approach, applying a range of assets in close partnership with our Allies and other countries in the region. Combating this threat is crucial to the success of the U.S. strategy. The best way to obtain results is through engagement with the international community, including the Government of Pakistan, collaboration within the U.S. Government and with multinational partners, and through the use of technology, training tools, and methods, along with a substantial and enforceable regulatory or legal regime.

JIEDDO assesses that the vast majority of significant precursors for HME in Afghanistan – ammonium nitrate fertilizers and potassium chlorate industrial chemicals – originate in, or transit through, Pakistan. Additionally, it is assessed that a significant portion of the weaponization process for HME precursors occurs in areas outside Afghanistan. Complicating this picture is the dual-use nature of many of these precursors; they are the product of legitimate industries that produce items such as agricultural fertilizer and matches. Although there is a limited manufacturing base in both fields, there is a larger chemical broker and transportation industry that, often unwittingly, makes up the IED supply chain. An additional challenge is the absence or infancy of Pakistani regulatory and law enforcement regimes to control the sale, transportation, or weaponization of these materials. Should Pakistan institute an effective regulatory regime, it still would require a much more robust enforcement capability than the one that is currently in place. Once precursor materials have entered the retail chain, efforts to restrict the movement of ammonium nitrate-based fertilizer and other HME precursors into Afghanistan are hindered by the high profit margins these products can bring to those who deal in them. The economic incentive to smuggle becomes too high. It is important to remember that Pakistan and its civilians and military are tragic victims of IED attacks, with over 10,000 civilians and over 2,000 military personnel either killed or wounded by IEDs since January 2008. In our efforts with Pakistani military counterparts, they have recognized the common threat of IEDs and have cooperated in ways that have exceeded the expectations of some.

Our efforts to counter IEDs require what JIEDDO's Director, Lieutenant General Michael Oates, calls a "combined arms approach." This includes applying multiple materiel and non-materiel solutions along the long line of IED production and using them to detect and disrupt IEDs in place or while being employed; IEDs constructed, acquired, or transported; and the diversion of precursors for IED manufacture both before and after weaponization.

Just as the IED supply chain is not limited by national borders, the counter-IED response cannot be limited to the interdiction of HME precursor materials in Afghanistan. Success against

the supply of HME precursor materials is essential to reduce the effect of IEDs on our forces, as well as on government personnel and civilians in Afghanistan and Pakistan. To achieve this success, JIEDDO will continue to employ its three core functions and to integrate these functions: 1) rapid response, 2) training, 3) and operations and intelligence fusion, to achieve an effect greater than the sum of each individual effort separately. Broader DoD efforts to focus intelligence, operational, and acquisition efforts will also be key over the long term.

Although there is still much to be done, we will need to focus on interrupting the IED supply chain, including through border interdiction efforts. As much of the licit and illicit material transport in Afghanistan is through smuggling and the black market, the more success that we have at border interdictions, the greater the reward for smugglers as the black market price goes up. Our success means that we may soon reach a point of diminishing returns.

Although there is much to do, Pakistan's recognition of the challenge has driven some progress. Through the Office of Defense Representative-Pakistan, and with Coalition partners, DoD continues to work on collaborative efforts with Pakistan to enhance our collective ability to defeat IED networks. If requested, DoD can provide additional information in classified settings on our cooperative efforts. Although DoD's efforts, along with other U.S. departments and agencies, to work with the Government and Security Forces of Pakistan on the IED-related challenges have only just begun, Pakistan recognizes the threat IEDs pose to their own security, but faces significant capability and capacity challenges. As with Coalition Forces in Afghanistan, IEDs are the single-highest casualty-producing threat against Pakistan military and security elements. The Pakistanis do appear to recognize the importance of a multilateral, comprehensive governmental solution to tackling the IED problem in order to protect Afghan and Pakistani civilians, as well as the security units trying to protect them.

There are additional efforts underway to develop needed capabilities and partnerships with the Government of Pakistan. The Department of Defense stands ready to bring its significant experience and expertise to bear to optimize the responses to this problem, which is essential to the success of the U.S. strategy in Afghanistan and Pakistan.