

U.S. Official Praises African Union's Counterterrorism Efforts

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Nations must nurture democracy to win war on terror, says Ambassador Crumpton



Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism Henry Crumpton (State Dept. photo)

To win the war on terrorism, nations must work together not only to destroy enemy networks but also to encourage democratic governance rooted in rule of law, tolerance and prosperity, says Ambassador-at-Large for Counterterrorism Henry Crumpton.

He spoke February 20 to a conference in Algeria. The conference, co-sponsored by the United States, the African Union (AU), and the Africa Center for Strategic Studies, hosted country representatives with the AU's Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (TSCI).

Crumpton told conference participants that because of the international community's gains against terrorists, al-Qaida and other groups would continue to seek out new safe havens in unstable corners of the world.

He called on TSCI participants, meeting to exchange information and develop counterterrorism policy recommendations, to consider the root causes of terrorism.

"In a society where a lack of freedom destroys hope, individuals sometimes feel they are justified to lash out in rage and frustration at those they believe responsible for their plight," said Crumpton.

As such, he said, the TSCI must focus on both "destructive" attacks on terrorists as well as "constructive" efforts to nurture democracy because "systems that are characterized by an absence of political choice, transparent governance, economic opportunities and personal freedoms can create incubators for extremism."

Ultimately, Crumpton concluded, denying terrorists safe haven requires a regional response from the TSCI, that "incorporates all the tools of governance: to attack the enemy, deny safe haven and to address the socio-economic-political needs of these safe havens."

For more information, see [Response to Terrorism](#).

Following is the transcript of the ambassador's remarks:

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE

REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR HENRY A. CRUMPTON

ALGIERS CONFERENCE

FEBRUARY 20, 2006

I am pleased to be here in Algiers following in the footsteps of my friend and predecessor Ambassador Cofer Black, who visited Algiers in October 2004, to address an equally distinguished group at the opening of the African Union's (AU) Counterterrorism (CT) Center. I want to compliment the AU and its members for their collective counterterrorism progress since that august start.

This forum represents the growing interdependence required to achieve our collective goals -- a transnational response to a transnational threat. I thank the General Fulford and the U.S. National Defense University's Africa Center for Strategic Studies. Ambassador Djinnit, thank you for your focus on counterterrorism issues and for your leadership. I also wish to thank the Algerian government, especially President Bouteflika, for the warm hospitality extended and for your counterterrorism success. And, in the context of this long and complex war, I acknowledge the Algerian people, for their stamina, determination, and courage. They serve as an example for all of us.

This is my first visit to Algeria, but not my first to Africa. I lived and worked in Africa for more than 10 years. I met my wife in Africa. We raised our children in Africa. I am honored to return. I am honored to be with you.

The organizers of this conference asked me to outline a common understanding of the global terrorist threat and how it has changed given the U.S. response to 9/11. I wish I could outline a complete, clear, unified, perfect understanding of such a complex challenge. We still struggle at the United Nations to agree on a common definition of terrorism. We debate about the war in Iraq; what will be the outcome, the impact? How will enemy tactics develop? Where is the next threat going to emerge? How do we measure the threat? How do we measure our success?

While we cannot answer all those questions today, I hope to offer some ideas and outline some broad parameters of the road before us. Then in the next few days, the hard work will rest with you. Let me stress a couple of those points at the outset.

In the coming decades this conflict, waged in a rapidly evolving global society, will take twists and turns that nobody can predict, despite our best intelligence efforts. We must therefore prepare for uncertainty, as you are doing in this forum, by building bonds of understanding and trust. We will need each other and we will need trust more than ever. Trust, rooted in understanding, promotes information sharing and collective strategies.

In the operational context, trust stimulates speed, agility, stealth, and collective strength. All of us are part of trusted networks. That, in large part, is the purpose of this conference. Yes, we must understand the enemy, the battlefield, the tactics, and determine practical countermeasures.

We must also understand ourselves. We must understand each other. Based on this knowledge, we must forge deeper bonds of trust. This conference and all of you can contribute to this network of trust. My second point: because of our collective efforts, because of our interdependent strength, we will win this fight.

What does al-Qaida look like today? In his letter to Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, al-Qaida's second-in-command Ayman al-Zawahiri laments their 2001 defeat in Afghanistan. He describes how the Afghan people rallied against them, denying al-Qaida their principal safe haven. He notes that Pakistan authorities have diminished their leadership ranks even further.

Because of this and broader international efforts, al-Qaida has lost their tight, pre 9/11 command and control structure. The capture of Hambali severed the link between al-Qaida and affiliated groups in Southeast Asia. The capture of Abu Faraj-al-Libi diminished contacts in the Middle East and North Africa. The death of Zawahiri's lieutenants in January 2006, in Pakistan, further isolated al-Qaida leadership. In this respect they are weaker and pose less of a direct threat.

Yet, because of these diminished links, al-Qaida has relied on other, indirect means of waging war. They seek to claim local and regional conflicts as their own. They incite violence through propaganda. They inspire others to embrace an existential conflict, one in which murder and suicide seem more appealing than justice and honor. They accept no constructive responsibility for their own plight, but rather blame others, especially the United States.

Dr. Bruce Hoffman, in his September 2005 testimony to Congress, noted that al-Qaida and its various allied forces exhibit the characteristics of an amorphous insurgency. I concur with this view. Al-Qaida and affiliates, including individuals, employ intelligence collection, denial and deception, propaganda, subversion, sabotage, terrorism, and open warfare. And, they employ these tactics to achieve an asymmetric, strategic impact.

Yet, for many terrorist organizations, terrorism is one of many tactics. For al-Qaida and some affiliates, terrorism has assumed a paramount, even defining, role. For these enemies, terrorism is not only a means to some political end, but also a means to define themselves. Radicalization has spread, and this particular notion of existential war now has regional, national, and local adherents. Witness the Zarqawi network in Iraq, remnants of the AQ East Africa network, JI in Southeast Asia, and GSPC [ed. note: Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat] in the Sahel. Local examples include the London, Madrid, and Sharm el-Sheikh bombers.

Iraq poses challenges, in terms of building a viable nation but also in terms of regional terrorism. In early December 2005 the Iraqi Defense Minister invited me to join him for a meeting with the tribal leaders of al-Anbar province; they were proud and critical yet also eager to seek political solutions, to care for their constituents. Increasingly these local leaders are contributing to the CT conflict.

Now, even indigenous, anti-coalition Iraqi insurgents are killing Zarqawi's foreign fighters. Most foreign fighters never leave Iraq, because they die. Some that do leave now understand the conflict is not a holy war, but rather a means to advance the cynical political interests of Al-Qaida and al-Zarqawi. Others simply go home, shaken and demoralized. Yet others may return to their countries of origin with tactical and leadership skills that pose grave danger. Yet, with progress in Iraq, with a newly elected democratic government, with foreign fighter safe haven growing less safe, radicalized forces, perhaps some with experience in Iraq, will seek other areas in which to gather and operate.

We can no longer assume that every state can control and direct threats emerging from its territory nor can we assume that weak and poorly governed states are merely a burden to their people or simply an international humanitarian concern.

Technology is eliminating the distance that once clearly separated us across land and sea. Safe havens in cyberspace and the ability to transfer funds, materiel and people depend on existing regional underground networks (such as those that exist for narcotics trafficking, piracy or people smuggling).

Most terrorist safe havens sit astride national borders, in places like the Sulu Sea, the Northwest Frontier - and the Sahel. Terrorists use national borders to their advantage. Denying terrorists safe haven therefore demands a regional response.

For this reason building regional partnerships is the cornerstone of any enduring counterterrorism strategy. The United States seeks full partners, bilaterally and regionally, to engage the enemy with all the instruments of statecraft.

We have witnessed in recent years how smuggling activity in arms and other goods in the Sahel by the GSPC has supplemented their terrorist activity. Now, the GSPC aims to establish a safe haven in the trans-Sahara region. The activities of the GSPC faction led by Abderrezak al-Para - including the holding of 32 European hostages in 2003 and running battles through many of your countries-- underscored the real threat posed to the region.

The GSPC has become a regional terrorist organization, recruiting and operating in all of your countries - and beyond. It is forging links with terrorist groups in Morocco, Nigeria, Mauritania, Tunisia and elsewhere. The June 2005 GSPC attack on a military outpost in Mauritania was stark confirmation that al-Para's capture has not deterred or ended the GSPC threat. After that attack, the terrorists fled into Mali.

If we do not act, we will see more such attacks. We see increased cooperation between terrorist groups in the region and, unfortunately, also new links to groups outside the region, including Europe. Al-Qaida leaders may be isolated and under pressure, unable to communicate effectively, but this has not prevented regional groups from establishing independent networks among themselves. In some ways, this poses even more daunting

intelligence collection and strategic policy challenges.

Because this is not a new threat, the United States sought, through the Pan-Sahel Initiative, to reinforce the CT capabilities of security forces in that area. We collectively understood that even this effort was insufficient, so we launched a new initiative to encompass a broader geographic area to include the Maghreb. We also agreed to expand our effort beyond security and military CT capabilities. Given that this threat resembles an insurgency, we must develop a counterinsurgency strategy that incorporates all the tools of governance: to attack the enemy, deny safe haven, and to address the socio-economic-political needs of these safe havens. Offensive tactical CT success buys us time and space to build the far more enduring, constructive programs society needs.

This new unique regional partnership is the Trans-Sahara Counterterrorism Initiative (or TSCTI). This initiative is why we are all here. This will be the subject of your conversations in the coming week. TSCTI seeks to link all of our CT efforts across the region, in the Maghreb countries, and in the Sahel.

We envision a multi-faceted, multi-year strategy aimed at defeating terrorist organizations by helping to strengthen regional counterterrorism capabilities, by enhancing and institutionalizing cooperation between your security forces and ours and *most* importantly, by promoting economic development, good governance, education, liberal institutions, and democracy. Through broad policy success we discredit terrorist ideology and deny them the recruits they need, while providing these erstwhile recruits opportunity and hope.

The isolation and ultimate destruction of terrorist networks is only the first step. We must offer much more in the second step. We must offer a better vision. We must replace an ideology of hatred with an ideology of hope. This is also a key part of this Initiative. Democratic governance programs would strive, in particular, to provide adequate levels of U.S. support for democratic and economic development in the Sahel to strengthen your abilities to manage terrorist threats.

Public diplomacy programs will allow us to work with you to expand outreach efforts in the Sahel and Maghreb regions, Nigeria, and Senegal, and seek to develop regional and local programming embracing this vast and diverse region. We will emphasize preserving the traditional tolerance and moderation displayed in African Muslim communities and countering the development of extremism, particularly in at-risk youth and in rural populations.

Practically, this implies that our most important task in the war on terrorism is not the "destructive" task of eradicating enemy networks, but the "constructive" task of building legitimacy, good governance, trust, prosperity, tolerance, and the rule of law. Systems that are characterized by an absence of political choice, transparent governance, economic opportunities and personal freedoms can create incubators for extremism.

We need to find ways to encourage and nurture democratization. In a society where a lack of freedom destroys hope, individuals sometimes feel they are justified to lash out in rage and frustration at those they believe responsible for their plight.

We envision assistance to all partner countries, including the creation of networks to exchange information. We hope to have many of the TSCTI programs in place later this year. The conclusions we reach in this conference and continuing work between your governments and ours will determine the substance of these programs.

This conference will lead to policy recommendations, to multi-agency programs, and to field operations. And, this process must be dynamic and quick to respond to shifting variables; strategic vision and implementation are interdependent. This is our collective mission. This conference provides us a regional CT opportunity, one that will have a profound impact on the enemy and all our citizens that deserve our help.

An African CT success will be a global CT success. Please allow me to quote the Algerian Ambassador to the U.S., His Excellency Amine Kherbi. In a speech to the U.S. National Defense University last year, in reference to TSCTI, he said, "These initiatives and programs are crucial for the prevention and the fight against terrorism. They have strategic importance for the stability and security of African countries. They are also an expression of U.S. concerns and show that Africa is vital for U.S. security and its long-term and global interests in the region."

Another key point: if we are to be successful in this war, we must overcome some of the political issues that divide us. Al-Qaida and others seek to leverage these differences in their favor. This is why we think that Morocco, and perhaps Mauritania, given continued progress on the restoration of democracy, must be full participants in TSCTI and in the global war on terror. We understand that not all TSCTI countries are members of the AU, and the United States will not insert itself into these issues. We note, however, that regional cooperation and security require that we value all our members' insights and expertise.

The role of the United States is to work with you, to identify how we can work together. Our operations in the war against terrorism need to be partner-led, home-grown initiatives -developed with local partners like you to meet *your* needs and to address the conditions on the ground. That is why my colleagues and I are here, and we look forward to our conversations this week with all of you.

In conclusion I offer the following summary of the broader, more enduring aspects of the TSCTI framework, that should include the following principles: "consultation, justice, and equality in its drive to achieve good governance, widen political participation, establish the rule of law, protect human rights, apply social justice, transparency, and accountability, fight corruption, and build civil society institutions." Those are words from the Mecca Declaration, signed by the leaders of the Organization of Islamic States in December 2005. This guidance will serve us well.

Ladies and gentlemen, I invite your questions.

(end transcript)