

As Delivered

Deputy Secretary Antony Blinken
Counter-Terrorism Committee High-Level Meeting
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[In Spanish]

On behalf of the United States, I'd like to express our deep appreciation to Minister Garcia-Margallo and Minister Fernandez Diaz for hosting this important and very timely discussion. I'd also like to thank Lithuania's Permanent Representative Murmokaite for her leadership as Chair of the Counter-Terrorism Committee.

It is both encouraging and incredibly sobering to see so many countries and international organizations here today. Your presence reflects the magnitude of the threat that we face, because the fact is the number of foreign terrorist fighters flocking to join extremist groups worldwide remains a challenge of grave concern.

In recent years, tens of thousands of foreign terrorist fighters from more than 100 countries have traveled to Iraq, to Syria to take up the banner of savagery, slavery, and slaughter.

They receive support from a network of propagandists, recruiters, and financiers who are well-resourced and use sophisticated communications technology to lure our citizens to serve their destructive purposes. The threat does not only come from distant lands. It comes from within our own communities all over the world. And we know that it can take many forms.

There is no single type of foreign terrorist fighter; no single method of recruitment; no single source of motivation or support.

Some foreign terrorist fighters are pious. Others are not. Some are misinformed and misled. Others are educated and knowledgeable. Some are beyond reach. Others will still listen. Some are more focused on what they're running *to*; others more driven by what they're running *from*. Some return disillusioned. Others return very, very dangerous.

But although there is no single story, there *are* common denominators—common factors that breed violent extremism, including feelings of alienation and exclusion, vile and rampant propaganda and recruitment on the internet, and insecure and porous borders.

That is why we are applying a comprehensive approach to tackle this challenge from every angle—and we’ve heard much of that today. And it’s just as we outlined ten months ago in United Nations Security Council Resolution 2178.

So now we’re approaching the one-year anniversary of its unanimous adoption, and it is time for all Member States—including the United States—to redouble our efforts to fulfill all of the Resolution’s obligations and all of its recommendations.

We are on the right track.

More than 30 countries have put in place new legal or administrative barriers to stop foreign recruitment.

They've strengthened investigative units, created specialized prosecutorial teams, and increased cooperation. Together, we're exchanging more intelligence data; we're tightening border security; we're stepping up education efforts to discourage radicalization.

The United States currently has information-sharing agreements with over 45 international partners to identify and track the travel of suspected terrorists. We also share information on a case-by-case basis with partners with whom we have had long-standing relationships.

But the fact is there is more that we can do—there is more that all of us must do to get ahead of the problem and to defeat it.

We have to further increase security at our borders to better identify, restrict, and report the travel of suspected foreign terrorist fighters. That means sharing passenger name records and advanced passenger information, especially within the EU zone.

It means taking greater advantage, as we heard earlier, of INTERPOL's resources—and screening passengers against its Foreign Terrorist Fighters database and its Stolen and Lost Travel Documents system.

And it means watchlisting suspected terrorists and sharing that information much more broadly. Countries that see higher numbers of foreign terrorist fighters being recruited—including Morocco, Tunisia, France, and Saudi Arabia—should increase their information-sharing with major transit countries, especially Turkey.

All these activities are grounded by a key principle that brings all of us here today—international cooperation. This challenge simply cannot be met by any one country alone. We must achieve a level of trust that allows us to rely on each other. And for our cooperation to be effective, we must ensure that countries get the assistance they need to build sufficient capacities to counter foreign terrorist fights. The UN is integral in this regard, and we must continue to lend our fullest support to their efforts.

Ultimately, we have to do more than spot and stop terrorist fighters. We also have to address the political, social, and economic grievances that alienate young men and women and make them more susceptible to the siren call of extreme ideologies.

Since President Obama issued a call to action at the United Nations last September and hosted a Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in February, a movement has grown. A movement of country leaders and company CEOs, municipal officials, young people, clerics, parents—all united behind one mission: to break the cycle of violent extremism.

Here today your presence reflects that broader engagement, and I want to thank everyone here for that engagement and the leadership of your countries in what is an incredibly ambitious agenda.

The challenge before us will not be won overnight, we all know that. And it will not be won by any one of us alone. But it will be won by the very tools and values that violent extremists seek to destroy: our human decency, our respect for rule-of-law, our embrace of pluralism, and our belief in the dignity of every single individual.

Thank you.