

**Statement of John F. Tierney
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**

“Oversight of the State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance Program”

As Prepared for Delivery

June 4, 2008

Good morning, everyone. Thank you for joining us this morning for our oversight hearing on the State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance program.

Let me start by thanking the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Representative Shays, for requesting this hearing and for asking the Government Accountability Office to take a look at this program.

The State Department’s Antiterrorism Assistance program is not one, I venture to guess, that many American people or Members of Congress know a whole lot about. But I think it’s an important one for a number of reasons, which is why I agreed with Ranking Member Shays to conduct this oversight hearing.

First, the Antiterrorism Assistance program is the State Department’s largest counterterrorism program, receiving \$171 million in fiscal year 2007. Second, its geographic reach is extensive, having trained police from over 140 countries since the program’s inception in 1983.

Third, the program’s focus – providing training to police from other countries – is one that has received scant attention during this so-called “war on terror.” While we continue to fund submarines at a cost of \$2 billion a piece and a new fleet of fighter planes that will cost a quarter-trillion dollars, efforts that have proven to pay real dividends today too often have to fight for a few extra dollars here or there.

During this Subcommittee’s most recent oversight trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan in March of this year, we heard repeatedly – from U.S. military officials and diplomats, from Afghan and Pakistani officials, from business leaders, and from others – about the vital importance of improving the police forces in these countries. These officials repeatedly stressed that having a fair and professional police force free from corruption is an absolutely vital bulwark against law-and-order voids that too often in recent history have been filled by al Qaeda and the Taliban.

Helping to train and professionalize law enforcement in other countries, as well as providing modern policing technology and equipment, can have a powerful impact in

supporting our partner nations, many of which do not have the means or the expertise to build effective police forces on their own.

I thank our two State Department witnesses for your service to our country and for being with us today to share your experiences and expertise in running the Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program.

I also thank our witness from the Government Accountability Office. To judge whether this program – or any other – is as efficient and cost-effective as possible, we need more than anecdotal evidence or raw information on the numbers of courses offered or police officers trained. We greatly appreciate the GAO's extensive audit and investigatory functions here and look forward to your testimony. Through your work, we can help ensure that we're getting the best bang for our buck.

GAO has found some room for improvement of the Antiterrorism Assistance program, and I'm very encouraged that our State Department views this critique as constructive. Instituting best practices and ensuring proper oversight is not only important to American taxpayers, but it also ensures that we are maximizing global efforts to stop terrorist acts, and therefore, enhancing our own national security.

My hope is that by the end of this hearing we all will know a lot more about the State Department's Antiterrorism Assistance program than we knew going in. I also hope that the discussion we're about to have will help inform the ongoing, broader debate about the most effective way to deal with the terrorist threat currently facing our country and our world.

Thank you again to all our witnesses for being here today. I now yield to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Representative Shays.