

Trans-atlantic Dialogue on Combating Crime-Terror Pipelines

Thank you very much Michael for the introduction. Thank you Maria [Otero] for your generous remarks about collaboration with the United Kingdom, and in particular our Home Office. I am delighted to have colleagues from the Home Office and the Serious Organised Crime Agency here with me today.

For more than a decade terrorism has been seen as the preeminent threat to the national security of both the United Kingdom and the United States.

In that time, extraordinary strides have been made – many of them together - in our efforts to counter terrorism.

We have learnt a huge amount along the way – in terms of better coordination and cooperation between our own departments and agencies – the importance of bringing to bear all of the tools of government, soft and hard power – and above all else the need to work internationally with partners and allies, to help tackle the conditions that can give rise to terrorism.

There are many lessons that can be equally applied to how we approach the threat from organised crime. Over the same period this has not attracted anything like the same degree of attention or investment.

But now there is a growing recognition – certainly in the UK – and mirrored here I think – that organised crime is a strategic challenge that requires a strategic response. As one of our Ministers put it – “we need to do for organised crime what we did for CT”.

The UK published its National Strategy – from Local to Global - “Reducing the Risk from Organised Crime” in July last year – the same week that the US Government produced its “Strategy to Combat Transnational Organized Crime”.

Whether chance or superb coordination – what this did was to signal a joint commitment to tackle a common threat.

The UK is also in the process of building a new National Crime Agency, to provide greater national coherence, capacity and coordination in how we deal with organised crime.

Central to the strategy and to the work of the agency is building up our understanding of the evolving threats we face.

The relationship between organised crime and terrorism is one of the key analytical areas we need to explore further.

This conference provides a timely challenge to us all, to consider whether, where and how the significant threats we face from organised crime and terrorism are converging? The threat picture is rapidly evolving – you only need to look to North and West Africa to see how the certainties of a couple of years ago have changed since the Arab Spring and fall of Qaddafi

I hope that when our respective experts get together in the later sessions, they will be able to identify not just areas where the way forward is clear, but also the gaps in our knowledge where greater collaboration could lead to real progress.

The picture of the convergence of the threat is not constant, and what we might see in one country is unlikely to coincide precisely with another. Indeed, our own experience within the UK is of a much clearer link between Northern Ireland Related Terrorism and organised crime than between other types of terrorism and organised crime. But, by drawing on our individual knowledge and experience, we can start to build a clearer picture together.

In the UK alone 38,000 criminals in 6,000 organised criminal groups have been identified – costing the UK an estimated £40million per year – although in reality that figure is likely to be very much higher. We should not forget the incalculable harm to our wider strategic interests – Organised Crime and terrorism tend to flourish where the rule of law and stability do not. I would like to echo what Maria about the Open Government Partnership and the importance of transparency in choking off corruption. The UK is committed to taking forward this agenda in partnership with the US.

It is an issue that is in our collective interests to address, with a clear political commitment, stronger national strategies, and capacities- and a common commitment to work effectively together. That so many departments and agencies – both from the US and the UK - are represented here, is therefore really welcome.

While she could not be here in person, I would like to give the final word to Teresa May, the Home Secretary who has asked me to read the following out on her behalf:

“I want to thank our US colleagues for hosting this event. It is important to the UK Government that we develop a better level of collective knowledge of the extent to which links exist between organised crime and terrorism.

The first duty of Government is to protect national security. Organised crime and terrorism threaten that security, and the prosperity and freedoms of nation states.

We need to understand the extent to which these threats may be converging, and where this is happening, so that it informs the decisions and responses that we make in the future.

We value highly our partnership with the US in tackling and responding to the threats posed by terrorism and organised crime. I wish you all success as you explore these issues over the next two days. I look forward to jointly building on the outcomes of this meeting as we move forward, including through the crime / terror pipelines meeting to be hosted by the UK in London in the autumn.”