DEPARTMENT OF STATE

STATEMENT OF

ERIC J. BOSWELL

ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DIPLOMATIC SECURITY
DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BEFORE THE

SENATE HOMELAND SECURITY SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT, THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA (HSGAC)

HEARING ON
THE DIPLOMAT'S SHIELD: DIPLOMATIC SECURITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. DIPLOMACY

June 29, 2011

Good Afternoon, Chairman Akaka and members of the committee –

I am honored to appear before you today. I would like to thank you and the Committee members for your continued support and interest in the Bureau of Diplomatic Security's programs. This support enables Diplomatic Security to safeguard American diplomats and facilities for the conduct of U.S. foreign policy, while maintaining our robust investigative programs, which serve to protect U.S. borders and diplomats abroad. As noted in the most recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) Report, Diplomatic Security's training program is at the core of our readiness to fulfill these missions. With your permission, I will make a brief statement.

As I have stated before this Committee in the past, Diplomatic Security continues to provide the most secure environment possible for the conduct of America's foreign policy. I must reiterate that the scope and scale of DS's responsibilities and authorities have grown immensely in response to emerging threats and security incidents. The Bureau needs significant resources to meet the requirements of securing our diplomatic facilities in the extremely high-threat environments of Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan, Yemen, and Mexico, as well as other dangerous locations worldwide. The Department now operates diplomatic missions in locations where, in the past, when faced with similar threats, we likely would have closed the post and evacuated all personnel. We do this because the continuous conduct of diplomacy in the post-9/11 environment is essential to our nation's security.

Diplomatic Security Training

To meet our challenges, now and in the future, Diplomatic Security personnel and resources have grown and evolved. This expansion has changed the requirements

for training our people. DS training has progressed tremendously in the past several years. The GAO review of DS training accurately reflects the exceptional success of our Training Directorate despite the challenges we face.

DS training has obtained accreditation with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Accreditation Board and developed an Instructional Systems Management team to track all received training. The number of personnel requiring training each year has swelled. The DS Training Center (DSTC) trains the Diplomatic Security Service's approximately 2,000 special agents, 340 security engineers and technicians, 101 couriers, and a growing number of new security protective specialists, as well as many other personnel of the Department of State and other U.S. government agencies serving under Chief of Mission authority. DSTC also runs several specialized programs to enhance Diplomatic Security's capabilities.

To ensure that the personnel we deploy are highly qualified, our training programs are carefully evaluated, including soliciting feedback, which enables us to offer the highest quality instruction to new and existing DS personnel. This evaluation process helps to verify that the training offered is relevant to the new realities of our Bureau's mission and ensures that DS personnel are prepared to assume increasing security responsibilities in high-threat and other challenging environments.

For example, to carry out the Department's mission in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, the Foreign Affairs Counter Threat – or FACT – course was designed for U.S. government personnel serving under Chief of Mission authority in those countries. In the past 12 months, more than 2,100 USG-personnel have completed the FACT training course. To assist the DS special agents serving in hostile environments, DS developed the High-Threat Tactical Training Course. DS now has

well over 700 special agents who are "high-threat qualified," and our long-term goal is to provide high-threat training to all DS agents.

In 2011, the transition of mission responsibility in Iraq – from military-led to civilian-led, with the consequential withdrawal of U.S. military forces – has caused the Department to rethink its pre-deployment training. As a result, the Department requested that DS and the Foreign Service Institute design and implement an additional specialized security immersion-training course for personnel assigned to Iraq under Chief of Mission authority. This new course furthers the upward trajectory of the training responsibility carried by the DSTC. More requests for this course are anticipated and will likely include personnel from other posts, such as Afghanistan. This new security immersion course is expected to kick off this summer, and we expect it to add a training load of 700 students in its first year.

GAO Training Report Recommendations

The GAO report made three specific recommendations for improvement to DS, two of which cite concerns that DS management already had been working to resolve.

The first of these recommendations suggests that the DS Training Center should develop or improve the ability to obtain post-training evaluations for all DSTC-required training. The second recommendation proposes improved processes to track DS training requirements and the completion of DSTC training.

DS concurs with these two recommendations, and the DSTC has been working to acquire an automated electronic survey tool that would be able to reach all students – State as well as non-State employees. To achieve this end:

- We are funding an online survey software tool in conjunction with discussions with the Foreign Service Institute (FSI). We are working with FSI, which manages the Department's enterprise-level Learning Management System for tracking, analyzing, and reporting purposes on distance learning courses and established curriculum. Data from DS's online survey tool could then be integrated seamlessly into FSI's existing database.
- We are also working with FSI to establish a controlled access site within the FSI Learning Management System for our various audiences, including State and non-State students, to help students provide feedback easily once training is complete.

DS constantly reviews student input and considers various recommendations to improve the existing curriculum. This improvement in feedback collection would ensure that DSTC courses meet the needs of all attendees.

The third recommendation is related to the Department's Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, or QDDR. The QDDR is coordinated by the Policy Planning Staff and the Office of Management, Policy, Rightsizing, and Innovation as part of the task to revise the risk management framework. The QDDR established the goal of operating more effectively in the dangerous environments where very real threats to our people have required us to limit the movement or activities of our personnel. DS participates in the review and implementation of the QDDR, as one of DS's strengths is its ability to balance diplomacy and security. An initial QDDR recommendation is to extend FACT training to all staff going to high-risk posts. DS is working with the Department in setting parameters for what additional posts should be added to this mandate.

Need for Consolidated Training Center

The 2011 GAO study of DS Training emphasized the need for a consolidated DS training facility, the requirement for which had been validated by a May 2008 report from the Department of State's Office of Inspector General. The report outlined an increased need for security training and provided the initial concepts for a consolidated security training complex.

The Department outlined a strategy for co-locating security training operations into one centralized location. A new Foreign Affairs Security Training Center, or FASTC, would be used to train law enforcement, security, and foreign affairs employees and others effectively in an efficient modern training facility. Personnel heading overseas would benefit from receiving critical security and life safety training in a centralized training venue.

As Diplomatic Security continues to explore ways to provide innovative security blueprints to help implement our national foreign policy priorities, it is important that we continue to develop a cadre of DS personnel who can think creatively to propose solutions and who can work closely and cooperatively with their embassy colleagues to succeed without sacrificing safety and security. Existing DS training facilities and instructor resources are now at maximum student capacity and capabilities, however. A new FASTC would expand and improve the delivery of FACT training for U.S. government employees working in high-threat locations.

Effectively Managing the Security Contractor Workforce

The Department uses private security contractors – PSCs – to assist in meeting security staffing requirements in critical-threat and non-permissive environments. As a result of operational changes already implemented and reviewed during the conduct of the Department's QDDR, the Department is able to ensure proper management, oversight, and operational control of PSCs deployed overseas by the Department. Further, DOS institutionalized many of these changes in the Worldwide Protective Services contract awarded in September 2010. This WPS contract incorporates essential lessons learned to ensure that PSCs contracted by the Department perform their activities in a professional, responsible, culturally sensitive, and cost-effective manner.

DS's plan for management, oversight, and operational control of PSC personnel includes the following:

- PSC operational control, administrative management, and contractual oversight will be performed at each location by DS personnel specifically assigned to WPS contract oversight responsibilities at each post. DS currently employs 81 special agents in Iraq to manage the Embassy's security programs in Baghdad, Erbil, and Tallil, which will close June 30, 2011. As the Department's presence in Iraq expands, DS is establishing and staffing 25 new special agent positions and up to 68 security protective specialist positions to manage each post's security program and provide direct operational control and contractual oversight of the security program and protective security details.
- The plan will ensure appropriate levels of professionalism and responsive operational responsibility through direct operational control and oversight of security contractor personnel.

- The plan will improve the image of the security footprint through enhanced cultural sensitivity and achieve greater efficiencies through new contract terms, such as one set of terms and conditions, to enhance the ability to provide uniform, appropriate, and consistent oversight.

Providing Support to Our Personnel and Their Families

The Department fully realizes that when one of its employees serves in a high-threat environment, the employee's whole family serves with him or her in one form or another. The State Department created the Deployment Stress Management Program – DSMP – in 2006. The DSMP is a community-based program that supports the psychological health of Foreign Service personnel and other employees of DOS and USAID, and their families, who are or will be assigned to high-stress, high-threat, unaccompanied tours. The DSMP provides information, referrals, initial assessment, and brief treatment for problems related to the stress of deployment. The program spans the entire timeframe of deployment operations, addressing prevention, early detection, and treatment of psychological health issues before, during, and after deployment. The program provides multiple approaches to treating and preventing symptoms, focusing on teaching and counseling to build psychological resiliency to help deal with stress.

DS personnel are taught health and safety information for first responders. DS has its own peer support group, which is a non-medical resource described as "for agents, by agents." In response to feedback from returning officers, the State Department mandates that employees spending more than 90 days in Iraq or Afghanistan attend the High Stress Assignment Outbrief Program. These outbriefs are highly recommended for officers returning from other high-stress, high-threat posts as well.

Both the DSMP and the DS Support Group are confidential avenues of assistance, and the overall team works diligently to overcome any stigma associated with seeking mental health care. The programs are flexible and tailored to the needs of the employee and his/her family. Future supervisors and colleagues of those personnel leaving high-stress assignments are advised to watch for any signs of deployment-related psychological health issues and any effect they may have on the person's life post-deployment. DS also has active-duty and retired agents who volunteer to stand by, 24 hours/7 days a week, to offer any support that a DS employee and his/her family might need.

Workforce and Management Challenges

I would like to briefly update you on the areas of workforce and management challenges that were a previous concern to the Committee. In May 2010, we created the Strategic Planning and Performance Team with the mission of evaluating key areas of interest, as directed by DS senior leadership, and providing recommendations for improvement. One outcome was the movement toward an Integrated Threat Response – ITR – that will include three levels of response to emergencies (immediate, intermediate, and enduring), as well as to high-threat, high-vulnerability situations with extended timeframes. The team evaluates performance and makes formal recommendations to help manage threats and support foreign policy initiatives. The team is making certain the ITR is fully integrated and operational across the Bureau.

Our recruitment efforts have also paid off. We will have no issue meeting our special agent hiring numbers this fiscal year and have established a healthy register for FY 2012 intake. We have closed the gap on our security engineering officer hiring and anticipate meeting our intake numbers for the fiscal year. It has taken us

several years to close this deficit, but through our outreach efforts we have succeeded. We are looking at ways to close the deficit for our security technical specialist intake, and we intend to increase our recruitment efforts at technical schools and military career fairs.

Furthermore, in 2009 the GAO reported that 53 percent of the regional security officers did not meet language-proficiency requirements. I am pleased to report that as of June 2011, we have improved our language proficiency, and of the positions requiring language, 64 percent of the RSOs fulfill the language requirement. We will continue to work with the Foreign Service Institute to further improve this area.

Conclusion

Our mission is unique, and DS remains one of the most dynamic agencies in the U.S. federal law enforcement and security community. In conclusion, I want to assure this Committee that DS is fully prepared to provide the secure platform and environment the Department of State needs to meet the challenging diplomatic responsibilities we face in this ever-changing world. Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you. With your continued support, we will ensure that the Diplomatic Security Service remains a valuable and effective resource for protecting our people, information, and infrastructure around the world.