HIGHLIGHTS OF A FORUM

Enhancing U.S. Partnerships in Countering Transnational Terrorism

What Participants Said
Forum participants discussed the types of partnerships or initiatives they have engaged in to counter the enabling environment that fosters transnational terrorism. Some of the partnership activities that participants cited include information sharing, training and capacity building, dialogue and education on counterterrorism, and conducting on-the-ground assessments. A few participants voiced concerns that certain labels for partnership programs could limit program effectiveness. Some participants also described characteristics of effective partnerships, such as shared objectives and common understanding of terminology.

Participants identified and ranked the challenges they currently face or have perceived in their partnerships to combat transnational terrorism. The top five challenges were (1) cultural differences and lack of trust, (2) differences in political views/foreign policy objectives, (3) differences in relationships with states from which extremists emerge, (4) lack of funding, and (5) lack of consensus about the underlying causes of terrorism (see figure).

Participants discussed strategies for overcoming some of the challenges. A few participants suggested that funding for counterterrorism programs and activities be made more flexible, so that it could be allocated where needed and have the most impact. Some participants indicated it would be helpful to gain a better understanding of extremist ideologies and the underlying causes of terrorism before making decisions about funding. A few participants also mentioned that knowledge and “practical capacity” in countering terrorism need to be integrated, so that the United States and its partners can gain a better understanding of extremism and current adversaries.

To view the full product, click on GAO-08-887SP. For more information, contact Charles M. Johnson Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.