

## Hearing Transcript

### House Homeland Security Committee Hearing on U.S. Refugee and Visa Programs Security

February 3, 2016

MCCAUL:

The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order. The Committee is meeting today to receive testimony regarding the threat posed from the exploitation of our nation's refugee and Visa programs by violent Islamist extremist groups, such as ISIS.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement. Today we are in the highest threat environment since 9/11, yet there is a crisis of confidence in Washington's ability to do what it takes to protect our country.

Over the past few weeks, I've traveled around the country to discuss the terror threats we face and how to thwart them. The American people are concerned and rightfully so. The President believes terrorist groups like ISIS are on the run, but the truth is that they are on the march and gaining ground across the world.

Make no mistake, they want to send their foot soldiers to our shores. And that is why we are here today. We must be clear-eyed about our enemies' goals and do what it takes to prevent them from exporting their violence to America.

This morning our focus is on our nation's refugee and visa programs. Terrorists have used these routes to get into our country, exposing security vulnerabilities into our systems. Just last month, the FBI arrested two Iraqis in the United States on terror-related charges. Both were inspired by ISIS. One had traveled to Syria, and both had entered our country as refugees.

In December, two ISIS fanatics in San Bernardino launched a heinous attack that left 14 dead and 22 wounded. One of these terrorists came into the United States already radicalized on a fiance visa.

Jihadists see these programs as a backdoor into America and will continue to exploit them until we take action. ISIS has vowed to send its operatives into the West, posing as refugees. And it has done so to brutally murder civilians on the streets of Paris.

Our intelligence community has also told me that individuals with terrorism ties in Syria have already tried to gain access to our country through the refugee program. What's even more concerning is that top officials have testified before this Committee that intelligence gaps prevent us from being able to confidently weed out terrorists from these groups.

This is why I drafted the SAFE Act, which passed the House with a bipartisan, veto-proof majority last year. It would add additional layers of security to the process of admitting refugees from the conflict zone.

Sadly, the White House has chosen to let partisan politics get in the way of national security and pushed for this bill to be blocked in the Senate. Without these enhanced protections in place, more violent extremists will be able to slip through the cracks undetected.

Our visa programs are an even bigger concern. On the chart behind me, you can see that terrorists have used student visas, tourist visas, and more to infiltrate our country and plot significant acts of terror.

But time and again, we have failed to close the vulnerabilities in the system quickly enough. Indeed, every one of the 9/11 hijackers came into the -- into America on a visa, and we failed to connect the dots to stop them. Several overstayed their visas and nothing was done.

We saw this again in 2012, when the FBI arrested a Moroccan national plotting a suicide bombing right here on Capitol Hill. The suspect entered our country on a tourist visa in 1999, and he never left.

In a report to Congress issued last month, DHS admitted that there are hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of aliens in this country. These individuals came in legally but did not leave when they were supposed to.

That is why we must fulfill one of the last remaining recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, by moving forward with a biometric entry-exit system to track those who overstay their welcome.

And we are currently working on legislation to close other glaring gaps in the system and to bring visa security screening into the 21st Century by incorporating social media data into screening.

More broadly speaking, this Committee has led the effort in Congress to shut down terrorist pathways into our country. Our bipartisan Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel, led by the Gentleman from New York, Mr. Katko, made more than 50 actionable recommendations to improve our defenses.

And I'm proud to say that, as of yesterday, we have taken legislative action to implement nearly half of them. This includes a major security overhaul of the Visa Waiver Program, through an effort spearheaded by this Committee's Vice Chair, Ms. Miller.

However, we are deeply concerned that despite signing this law, the President does not plan to implement it faithfully. This failure of implementation is not the topic of today's hearing. The Committee will convene one week from today to question witnesses from DHS and the State Department on their inaction.

Let us not forget that we are engaged in a war against Islamist terror. Americans expect us to act like it, and they -- and to do what it takes to respond to the evolving threat and secure our homeland.

With that, now the Chair recognizes the Ranking Member, the Gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Thompson.

THOMPSON:

Thank you, very much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding today's hearing. I'd, also, like to thank the Department of Homeland Security and Department of State for being witnesses here today.

Given the evolving threat environment, it's proper that this Committee examine both the visa security and the refugee vetting process. Last month, in separate incidents, two Iraqi refugees, accused of having ties to the Islamic State, were arrested in Sacramento and Houston.

In December of last year, the United States was stunned when a mass shooting and attempted bombing were perpetrated by two attackers in San Bernardino, California. The perpetrators were husband and wife, and the wife entered the United States on a K, or a finance visa.

Also, in November, it was reported that a fake Syrian passport was found with one of the terrorists who carried out the deadly Paris attacks, directed by ISIL. Consequently, I understand the concern that is presented here today.

However, as I've stated in previous hearings, it's important that we, as federal policy makers, embrace facts, not fear. Our refugee screening process includes the most thorough vetting any visitor or immigrant to the United States undergoes, with DHS conducting an enhanced review of Syrian refugee cases.

Throughout the refugee application process, applications continue to be checked against terrorist databases to ensure no new information has come to light. If there's any doubt about whether an applicant poses a risk, that person will not be admitted.

With proper vetting, we should continue to welcome vulnerable populations to this country, including Syrian refugees in keeping with our history and values as Americans. Providing safe harbor to individuals who no longer have a home because of war and violence is the humane and American thing to do.

Today, I hope to hear from the Department of Homeland Security about information that the agency can publicly share about its improvement to the refugee vetting process. Advancements in technology and the evolving threat environment require continual evaluation of how the agencies use technology in the vetting and screening processes.

It has been reported that United States citizenship and immigration services is piloting the use of social media in vetting refugee applications. While we understand social media can play a role in refugee vetting, we should remember it is only one part of an extensive process.

Frankly, the more explicit we are about our refugee vetting process in public, particularly with respect to social media, the more valuable information we stand to lose. Users have the ability to control their social media. So we do not want to tip them off.

Additionally, while the overwhelming majority of visa holders are legitimate visitors, who comply with the terms of their visas and depart in a timely fashion, some have exploited the system.

In the wake of September 11, the attempted Christmas Day 2009 attack, and other incidents, we strengthened our visa security by pushing out our borders, conducting screening early in the process, and enhancing how we vet visa applicants.

I want to hear from DHS and the State Department about what needs to be done and what resources are necessary to address security vetting challenges. I'm particularly interested in knowing whether there's a way to improve the vetting process to identify people that seek to do us harm, but on whom we have no derogatory information, which I understand was the case with one of the San Bernardino perpetrators.

As we consider reviews of the refugee and visa security processes, we need to make sure that if there are improvements that need to be made, Congress will commit the funding for them. We cannot make substantial changes to these programs if they are not properly funded.

Finally, Mr. Chair, in December, the House came together and passed legislation to strengthen the Visa Waiver Program. I understand, as you've already indicated, that next week the Committee will hold a hearing on the Visa Waiver Program and specifically how the Administration intends to implement language including in the recent enacted omnibus appropriation bill to prohibit individuals with citizenship in -- in, or recent travel to, Iraq, Iran, Sudan, or Syria from coming to the U.S. under the Visa Waiver Program.

Instead, such travelers will have to obtain a Visa. I strongly support giving the Secretary discretion to waive the visa requirement when doing so is in the interest of our national security, as provided for under the law.

And, in fact, supported some discretion for certain individuals, on a case-by-case basis, who travel to one of the four countries for verifiable legitimate purposes. However, I'm concerned about recent statements indicating that the Department of State and Homeland Security may attempt to exempt broad categories of travelers from the requirements of the law. And I look forward to hearing some comment, at some point, on that.

Mr. Chairman, with that, I yield back the balance of my time.

MCCAUL:

I thank the Ranking Member.

Other members are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record. We're pleased to have a distinguished panel here before us today. First, Mr. Francis Taylor assumed his

post as Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security in April of 2014.

In this role, he provides Secretary Johnson, DHS senior leadership, DHS components and the state and local, tribal, private sector partners with the Homeland Security intelligence and information they need to keep the country safe, secure, and resilient. Thank you for being here, and thank you for your service.

Previously, he served as Assistant Secretary of State for Diplomatic Security and Director of the Office of Foreign Missions.

Mr. Leon Rodriguez was confirmed by the United States Senate in June 2014, as the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. He previously served as the Director of the -- for the Office of Civil Rights at the Department of Health and Human Services, a position he held from 2011 to 2014.

Prior to that time, he served as Chief of Staff and Deputy Assistance Attorney General for Civil Rights at the Department of Justice.

Mr. Kubiak assumed the role, our next witness, of Assistant Director for International Operations at the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement on June 30, 2014. In this position, he is responsible for a budget of more than \$130 million and operational oversight of 63 offices in 46 countries and eight Department of Defense liaison offices with over 400 personnel.

And, finally, Ms. Michele Bond was sworn in as the Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs on August 10, 2015. She leads a team of 13,000 Consular professionals in almost 300 locations across the United States and around the world, who protect the lives and interests of U.S. citizens abroad.

I want to thank all of you for being here today. And I now recognize Mr. Taylor for his testimony.

TAYLOR:

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, thank you, and distinguished Members of the Committee, for allowing us to appear before you this morning to discuss DHS' refugee visa and other admissions screening and vetting efforts.

I've prepared a statement for the record, sir, but I would just highlight in my oral comments a few other items. DHS, together with our law enforcement intelligence colleagues, leverage a range of information and processes to carry out screening and vetting supporting our operational missions, including preventing terrorism.

Screen and vetting are key to refugee visa and other admissions processes. Every day, DHS, with our interagency partners, vet millions of individuals traveling to, from, or within the United States, applying -- those applying for citizenship and immigration benefits and those applying for credentials and special accesses.

Our screening and vetting efforts include biometric and biograph information collection, in-person interviews, detailed research and analysis, database vetting and bulk data screening, publicly available information vetting, including social media and identity verification.

Because of the technical advances and the evolving nature of the threat environment that we face, we have efforts continuously underway to enhance our screening and vetting processes. Additionally, since -- in December, Secretary Johnson asked me to lead a review of the department's current use of social media in our vetting and identity processes to develop a future state that optimizes the use of social media vetting across our department.

Our review found that, while social media efforts are underway across the department, social media use, as a vetting tool, by components is varied and could benefit from a unified approach that leverages the strength of the entire department and state of the art technological capabilities.

The next step for us is to address these issues, which we are aggressively working to do. While I cannot get into the specifics of many aspects of our screening and vetting efforts in an open hearing, these are the broad steps DHS is taking to further improve our screening and vetting of refugees and visa applicants.

One, developing policies and a framework to systematically leverage all information and intelligence available to the U.S. government to inform our vetting programs and adjudication decisions.

Second, continuously screening applicants against U.S. government holdings at every stage of the vetting process to ensure that new information regarding applicants informs our admission decisions.

Third, continuously refining and enhancing our policies, processes, capabilities and systems, as we have since 9/11, to ensure that we leverage emerging technologies and capabilities and adapt to a constantly evolving threat environment, while we're protecting privacy and civil liberties.

And, fourth, determining the appropriate DHS investment strategy needed to automate a process that enables bulk data screening and analysis in a manner that protects both individual liberties, but produces information of value.

These are just a few of the steps DHS is taking to meet this challenge, and we will continue to seek new ways to solve our most pressing national security issues and fulfill our border security immigration and travel security and other Homeland Security missions.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the Committee, thank you, again, for the opportunity to appear before. I look forward to answering your questions.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Secretary Taylor.

The Chair now recognizes Director Rodriguez.

RODRIGUEZ:

Good morning, Chairman, Ranking Member, Members of the Committee. Thank you, all, for convening this very important hearing. Chairman and Ranking Member, as both of you observed, there are very active and dangerous individuals and organizations who are sworn to the destruction of our country.

Every morning when I wake up, to begin to do my work, I think about exactly that. I want to talk about where the refugee program sits in the context of those threats. We have heard the refugee program described as a purely humanitarian and optional undertaking.

I am here this morning, among other things, to suggest to you that the refugee program is, in fact, a vital part of both our foreign policy and our national security. Let's talk about the specific Syrian case. The 4 million refugees now dispersed throughout the Middle East and Europe are, on the whole, the victims of the very individuals who are sworn to destroy us, here in the United States.

They are now scattered throughout both the Middle East and Europe. Four hundred thousand Syrian refugee children are not in school. And I do not need to dwell too long on what the consequences of that could be, in terms of human trafficking, potential for radicalization, a long risk of other risks and harms, which should be intuitive to this body.

And, so, therefore, refugee admissions are a critical element of regional stability, stabilizing the regions where these individuals are located, which, in turn, has important consequences to the United States.

And standing together with our European allies, who, in fact, are facing this problem very imminently. While we are talking about taking 10,000, roughly, here in the United States, many of my European colleagues are spending -- are dealing with many, many times that, already in their borders, and, in fact, in many cases, without any control at all.

The 10,000 we're talking about is merely a quarter of a percent of the 4 million who are currently refugees and even smaller fraction of the number of Syrians who are displaced, either within Syria or elsewhere in the world. They, also, represented about one three- hundredth of one percent of the overall population of the United States.

And, so, I would suggest to fail to admit refugees, who are, in fact, the most immediate and most severe victims of that sort of terrorism, of those sorts of threats, would cede a vital part of the battlefield to the very people who are seeking to destroy us.

Now, in order to admit those refugees, we need to do it safely. And that is really the critical topic of this hearing today. And I'm here to talk both about refugees and, more generally, about our immigration system, and what we do, and have been doing, for a very long time to ensure that those who seek the benefit of coming to the United States and staying to the United States are not

those who mean us harm, either as threats to our national security or, otherwise, as threats to our society.

In fact, refugees go through a very lengthy process involving multiple interviews, multiple screenings. They are checked against databases of the United States law enforcement, the intelligence community, Customs and Border Protection, State Department Advisory Services.

And many of these are tools that, for example, when we talk about September 11, did not exist at that time, were not in utilization at that time. Even when we talk about individuals who came in 2009, 2010, some of the most powerful tools we use now are tools that were not in existence at that time.

And let me talk about one particular example. It's a tool that we call the interagency check, that is now used in the case of virtually every Syrian who is admitted as a refugee, in the case of every Iraqi who is admitted as a refugee. That sort of check goes against the entire universe of intelligence holdings and law enforcement holdings of the United States.

And, as evidence of the effectiveness of the use of those tools, alongside the 2,000 or so Syrians who have now been admitted, there are also 30 individuals who were denied outright, because they failed either the check or the interview process.

And there are several hundred who are on hold, as our Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate conducts a more thorough investigation of those cases, before we make a final decision. In fact, many of those may end up being denied, because we are unable to resolve the concerns that we have about those individuals.

I look forward to talking in more detail. These are, indeed, vital issues. And I do want to provide both this committee and the American people the reassurance that they require, so we can engage in this strategically important effort of refugee admission. Thank you.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Director Rodriguez.

The Chair now recognizes Assistant Director Kubiak.

KUBIAK:

Good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson and the distinguished Members. Thank you for the opportunity to discuss ISIS' international engagement and security efforts to confront dangerous challenges on a global stage.

Today, I am honored to provide an overview of our international operations and to highlight a program, I believe, based on my 20 years as a law enforcement officer, is one of the most critical and important U.S. security programs that we have, at this point in our history.

It will provide a little more granularity to Director Rodriguez's comments about new programs that have been instituted since 9/11 that increase the vetting process that we have overseas.

Currently, ICE focused on detecting and deterring threats before they reach our nation's borders. To that end, we deploy approximately 250 special agents and 170 support and investigative staff to 62 offices in 46 countries.

Our international staff works in conjunction with their foreign law enforcement counterparts to detect, disrupt, and dismantle transnational criminal organizations and individuals that intend harm.

As you know, the Homeland Security Act of 2002 authorizes the deployment of DHS officers to diplomatic posts to perform visa security activities and provide advice and training to our State Department Consular Affairs colleagues.

This critical mission is accomplished by the Visa Security Program, which we refer to as VSP. The VSP's primary purpose is to identify terrorists and criminals, or other aliens, ineligible for the visa -- for a visa, prior to their travel or application for admission to the United States.

VSP places our investigators on the front line of defense so that they can exploit terrorist and criminal organizations through the visa adjudication process, which is one of our first opportunities to assess whether a potential visitor or immigrant poses a potential threat.

The U.S. government continuously vets applicants, from the time they submit their application through the time they make their travel arrangements, to the time that they appear at our border and beyond.

As new information becomes available through our screening processes, it is provided to the appropriate decision-makers, which can be state, CIS, CBP, or ICE, to ensure we use all of our tools and authorities to protect the United States from individuals who may present a security concern.

Recently, in 2014, we instituted the Pre-Adjudicated Threat Recognition and Intelligence Operations Team, which we call PATRIOT, initiative, as an important part of this screening process.

ICE personnel, in coordination with state and CBP, use the results of the automated screening process to identify individuals of concern. Those individuals are then referred specifically to specially trained ICE special agents currently deployed to 26 high- risk locations in 20 countries.

One of the most effective aspects of this program is its use of automated screening tools, which identify individuals of concern early in the visa application process, which then allows us to utilize our law enforcement tools in country, to participate in interviews and to engage international law enforcement partners to identify additional information that would not otherwise be available to the United States government.

At the VSP locations, ICE conducts targeted in-depth reviews of high-risk applicants prior to visa issuance and makes recommendations to consular officers to refuse visas when warranted. ICE actions complement the Consular officer's screening, applicant interviews, and reviews of applicants and supporting documentation.

At the same time, VSP also facilitates the travel of individuals who, as a result of the enhanced screening, are determined not to be our targets of interest. In fiscal year 2015 alone, VSP screened approximately 2 million visa applicants from these designated high-risk locations and made recommendations contributing to the refusal of over 8,000 visas by State.

Of those refusals, over 2,200 applicants had some suspected connection to terrorism. Last year alone, we were able to create or enhance 760 records in the United States terrorist database, as a result of VSP operations globally.

With the \$18 million enhancement to VSP that Congress provided ICE in FY '15, VSP operations expanded to six additional visa-issuing posts last year. This is the single largest expansion of the VSP program in its 13-year history.

Further, using the same FY '15 money, ICE will expand to four additional locations in '16, making -- which will result in a 50 percent increase and expansion of the program globally in just two years.

This record expansion is made possible by the additional Congressional funding, by CVP and ICE's joint initiative to central PATRIOT screening and vetting in the National Capital Region, in collaboration with the Department of State on site selection, post selection, and expansion.

Together, ICE and State are now jointly training overseas personnel and integrating staff at embassies to enhance regular and timely information sharing. ICE, CBP, and State Department personnel are collectively identifying ways to further improve screening and vetting constantly and to identify the most critical embassies for future expansion.

Thank you, very much, for inviting me to testify today and for your continued support of the ICE mission and its law enforcement mission overseas. HSI remains committed to working with this Committee to help prevent and combat threats to our nation. I look forward to your questions.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Director Kubiak.

The Chair now recognizes Assistant Secretary Ms. Bond to testify.

BOND:

Thank you. Good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to testify today on the topic of security vetting for visa applicants.

The Department of State and our partner agencies throughout the federal government, take our commitment to protect America's borders and citizens seriously. And we constantly analyze and update our clearance procedures.

My written statement, which I request be put into the record, describes the rigorous screening regimen that applies to all visa categories. The vast majority of visa applicants, and all immigrant and fiancee visa applicants, are interviewed by a Consular officer.

Every Consular officer completes an extensive training course with a strong emphasis on border security, fraud prevention, interagency coordination, and interviewing techniques. All these applicant data are vetted against databases, including terrorist identity databases that contain millions of records of individuals found ineligible for visas or regarding whom potentially derogatory information exists.

We fingerprint nearly all visa applicants and screen them against the DHS and FBI databases of known and suspected terrorists, wanted persons, immigration law violators, and criminals. All visa applicants are screened against photos of known or suspected terrorists and prior visa applicants.

When the interagency screening process shows potentially disqualifying derogatory information, the Consular officer suspends visa processing and submits a request for a Washington-based interagency security advisory opinion review, conducted by federal law enforcement, intelligence agencies, and the Department of State.

The Department of Homeland Security's PATRIOT system and Visa Security Program, as described, provide additional protections at certain overseas posts. DHS, Immigration, and Customs Enforcement special agents, assigned to more than 20 embassies and consulates in high-threat locations, provide on-site vetting of these applications and other law enforcement support to our Consular officers.

Security reviews do not stop when the visa is issued. The department and partner agencies continuously match new threat information with our records of existing visas. Now, we refuse more than a million visa applications a year.

And, since 2001, the department has revoked more than 122,000 visas, based on information that surfaced after issuance of the visa. This includes nearly 10,000 visas revoked for suspected links to terrorism, again, based on information that surfaced after issuance.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the Committee, the Department of State has no higher priority than the safety of our fellow citizens at home and overseas and the security of the traveling public. Every visa decision we make is a national security decision.

We appreciate the support of Congress, as we work to strengthen our defenses. I encourage each of you to visit our Consular sections when you are abroad to see how we do this on a daily basis. I look forward to your questions. Thank you.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Secretary Bond.

And I now recognize myself for questioning. I think the most important mission, as I look at the department's mission, it involves travel and it involves identifying threats and keeping bad people and bad things outside the United States, keeping them from coming into this country.

We are here today, primarily, as a result of the San Bernardino shooting, and the fact that Malik, a Pakistani foreign national was -- was granted a visa, came into the United States, and then it was divulged that her social media had not been reviewed prior to coming into the United States, or as part of the visa application process.

Something as fundamental that, really, any employer, before they hire someone, that I'm aware of, check is someone's social media. And, yet, we seem to have this antiquated system that we want to bring now into the 21st Century when it comes to -- to something so vitally important as -- as the nation's security.

I understand that there's nothing derogatory on her Facebook account. I think that's worth mentioning. But, Mr. Taylor, your predecessor, Mr. Cohen, raised this as an issue, as well, that the department was not looking at social media.

It's my understanding that, since that time, that there have been three pilot programs launched, looking specifically at the Syrian refugee program. It's important to note that, since May, more than 40 suspected jihadists have been caught entering Europe through the Syrian refugee process. Many, if not all, had links to ISIS.

So, I guess, my first question is, and I think mainly to our Homeland Security witnesses, is -- and I understand there are 10.5 million visa applicants per year. It's an enormous number. And there are hundreds of thousands of refugees.

But when we look at the 10,000 Syrian refugees I think the American people are most concerned with, and the Congress, can you tell us now, in light of the San Bernardino shooting, what are we doing with respect to the admittance of those 10,000 Syrian refugees into the United States?

Are we checking their social media accounts, Mr. Taylor?

TAYLOR:

Sir, thank you for the question, sir. And I think Director Rodriguez can address that specific question. But I'd like, for the record, to be clear that Mr. Cohen's suggestion that there was a prohibition on the use of social media in the Department of Homeland Security is false.

We have had policy in place since 2012. And to date, there are 33 instances within the department where components are using social media. The challenge the secretary recognized was that the -- it's not -- we were not doing it comprehensively, as a department.

And, as you know, one of his big pushes has been to organize departmental information in a way that complements the various missions of our components. And that's what our task force is focused on. How can we organize ourselves to use this in a most effective way, across all of the missions that the department performs?

Dr. Rodriguez?

MCCAUL:

And I want to give you the opportunity to respond, because that's been made a big deal in the media. But when was the task force formed?

TAYLOR:

My task force was formed on the 15th of December. And the policy in the department was written in 2012 that authorized use of social media across the components.

RODRIGUEZ:

So, at this point, with respect to the Syrian refugee stream, we are reviewing social media in those cases where there are existing flags of concern. We are building, as quickly as we can, to build to a point where we would, in fact, be screening the entire body of Syrian refugee applicants.

We are prioritizing. As we bring new resources online, we are prioritizing those areas where we detect the greatest risk. I think we, hopefully, discussed some of that yesterday in the classified briefing.

I think it's important to, as we talk about social media, to place it in the right context of the overall screening that we do. It is one tool among a battery of tools that we use, in order to screen individuals.

So it is used in conjunction with the information that we derive from intelligence databases. It is used in conjunction with the multiple interviews that are conducted of these individuals before they are granted admission.

And, particularly important to recognize, that those individuals are done with the benefit of intense briefing to our officers, based on both classified and non-classified sources on the country conditions, to a great degree of granularity, that exists in the countries from which they are coming, whether we're talking about Syria or Iraq.

The other thing I want to emphasize is we're not only going to be talking about Syria, as we bring this capability on, but, also, Iraq. If we look at the history of the individuals who've been arrested

for terrorist plots, that is really -- there is more of a history, certainly, of individuals being -- having terrorist plots disrupted by our...

MCCAUL:

My time is expiring. But, in those cases, where we did have intelligence, we brought in terrorists.

RODRIGUEZ:

In -- in -- again, that's where the importance, and I'd like an opportunity to answer that, at some other point, that's why the importance of the interagency check, which was not used in the same manner at the time of the...

MCCAUL:

And I understand all that, and this is about social media. When the director of the FBI testified here, and secretary of Homeland, they raised concerns about the lack of databases to query to properly vet.

So my question, again, is, are we checking the social media for the 10,000 Syrian refugees that we're bringing into the United States?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. No, and that's what I was meaning to address at the beginning. We are doing that in cases of flags of concern. We're adding resources quickly so that we use that, in fact, over the entire body of...

MCCAUL:

But not all of them?

RODRIGUEZ:

... the entire body of...

MCCAUL:

Just the high risk 10,000 or all of them?

RODRIGUEZ:

Right now. And then we're gonna be moving to covering the entire population.

MCCAUL:

Which leads me to my next question, and in -- and, so, these visa security units, where ICE is located in the embassy, these are really the high-risk countries. It seems to me you don't quite have the capability yet on the -- to -- we get the algorithms to check the social media, but my recommendation would be that this be expanded, this social media checking and vetting, not just to the 10,000 Syrian refugees, but to all the visa security units across the globe.

TAYLOR:

Sir, that's our intent, to be as comprehensive as we can in capability, to allow the maximum amount of vetting against that particular dataset, for the purposes of our department's mission. So it's not limited.

We started with the K1s and the refugees, because that's a starting set. But the longer term plan is to apply that capability against all of the vetting responsibilities that we...

MCCAUL:

Well, you certainly have my strong support, too, for that expansion and anything we can do to help you, let us know.

TAYLOR:

Yes, sir.

MCCAUL:

With that, I recognize the Ranking Member.

THOMPSON:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Taking off where you -- on your line of questioning, Mr. Kubiak, relative to the Visa Security Programs, we, historically, have had six -- there were six new high-risk visa issuing ports authorized, bringing it to 26.

Now, it's my understanding that in the 2016 omnibus appropriation, it did not provide adequate funding to operate the expanded number of Visa Security Programs. If we are mandating, as Congress, for you to do more and don't provide the money, how are you gonna expand that Visa Security Program?

KUBIAK:

Thank you for the question. Funding that we were provided in FY '15 also was accompanied by an ability to carry some of that money over into FY '16. And, so, we have been very judiciously using the money and reapportioning the money around the globe to cover off on the larger threats, as we see them developing.

And, so, we're able to use some of the money that Congress gave us in '15, in '16 for that expansion and to continue the expansion of VSP and the enhancements of the PATRIOT screening and vetting process, as we move forward.

Obviously, we are always able to do more with more. And, so, if in -- for future appropriations, we're always looking for the way to expand the VSP program. But, for now, we are find for '15 and '16, as we move forward.

THOMPSON:

Because you're able to use prior years' funding to support present years' mission?

KUBIAK:

Yes, sir. And that was an important enhancement that Congress gave us last year, was to be able to carry over that funding.

THOMPSON:

General Taylor, following that line of questioning, with respect to the platforms for social media and other things that there's interest on this committee, have we identified the resources to complete the -- those projects related to establishing the new platforms on social media?

TAYLOR:

Sir, that's a part of our charter, to develop an investment strategy around that capability. This Committee has been very supportive of, certainly, I&A's efforts at using data within DHS. Those -- that funding has been very useful for us in moving that forward.

But we don't know, yet, what the exact amount will be. And, once we have that completed, we'll get it through the process and get it back up to the Hill.

THOMPSON:

Well, can you kind of talk to us a little bit about whether or not you've identified the personnel necessary to carry out that mission, or are we gonna have to depend on outside contractors to complete that mission?

TAYLOR:

You know, sir, the -- my experience in this is that, at the beginning, we probably won't have enough capability on board in the government to -- to do this robustly, and that we will have to do some contracting, particularly for linguists.

When one's talking about social media, all social media is not in English. So we need language skills and those sorts of things, which are more readily available, initially, in the private sector.

But long term, I think we will build a capability that mirrors our department's responsibility to review this type of data and do so with government employees that are trained and able to do it. But my sense is the initial investment will be heavily contractor.

THOMPSON:

Thank you.

Ms. Bond, for the record, there have been some discussion about the San Bernardino individual, Malik's, Facebook page. In a public setting, can you kind of clarify whether or not the presence or the lack of derogatory information was on her social media?

BOND:

Sir, to my knowledge, there was nothing that was publicly accessible that -- that indicated jihadist or other threatening beliefs. I don't believe there was anything on a Facebook page or something else that one would have been able to find.

THOMPSON:

Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

The Chair recognizes Mr. Smith, from Texas.

SMITH:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Bond, let me return to the subject of Syrian refugees. What percentage of Syrian refugees are males, overall?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah, actually, I think I should take that question.

SMITH:

Okay. Director Rodriguez, then.

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. I -- I believe that it is a minority of the...

SMITH:

The U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees says 62 percent are male, or...

RODRIGUEZ:

Well, are we talking about ones that we've actually admitted to the United States, or are we talking about the overall refugee stream? Because normally what's referred to the United States, most typically, are family units.

SMITH:

Let's go by admitted Syrian refugees. What percentage are males? And what percentage are males of military age, whether they're connected to families or not?

RODRIGUEZ:

We -- we can -- I don't -- I don't have that specific data in front of me, but I can make it available to this Committee.

SMITH:

Okay. Well, let me tell you what I think the answer is. According to the U.N. High Commission on Refugees that -- that is the source for 62 percent are male. And your own data says about 25 percent are males of military age, whether they're connected to families or not.

Do you have any reason to believe that that's not the case?

RODRIGUEZ:

I have no reason to believe that that's not the case. I'd like to get you the exact figures, based on our experience. But I have no reason to think that that's not the case.

SMITH:

The State Department tries to, I think, skew the data a little bit. And they say only two percent are males connected to families, but if you leave off the connected to families, it suddenly expands to about a quarter -- or males of military age. If you don't -- if you don't find any problem with that, that's good.

Let me go to Secretary Taylor for a second. Secretary Taylor, what percentage of Syrian refugees are you unable to conduct any background check involving third-party or independent data? In other words, what percentage of Syrian refugees, in effect, have a clean slate, except for what they, themselves, tell you?

And, by the way, by clean slate I don't mean that they're innocent of any wrongdoing. I'm just saying what percentage are you unable to conduct any kind of a background check involving independent data?

TAYLOR:

We are able to conduct a background check on 100 percent...

SMITH:

Right. That wasn't my question. I know you conduct background checks. I'm just saying, what percentage are you able to vet that have independent third-party data that you are -- have access to?

TAYLOR:

Sir, I'm not sure I understand.

Perhaps, Dr. Rodriguez, you would...

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. I think the essence of your question, Congressman, is when we query the various databases that both General Taylor and I have described, what percentage of those individuals don't show up on those databases, at all, meaning...

SMITH:

Right. Again -- again, a blank slate. You have no information on them...

RODRIGUEZ:

Right.

SMITH:

Whatsoever.

RODRIGUEZ:

And I've described to you the cases where individuals are in those databases, because there is derogatory information about them on those databases. And you're asking what portion. Happily, actually, a very large portion don't have derogatory information about them. I think your question is...

SMITH:

No, no. I'm not...

RODRIGUEZ:

But -- do we have...

SMITH:

Any information -- when you have no information about somebody, what percentage of Syrian refugees fall into that category?

RODRIGUEZ:

Well, we -- we, generally, do have information that is beyond just what that individual provides. In other words, we are checking, also, against country conditions. We are...

SMITH:

No. Again, let me -- let me go to my question, and hope you'll answer it. What percentage of Syrian refugees do you have no independent data on?

RODRIGUEZ:

A large percentage do not have derogatory information in those databases. There is other documentation that they present in just about every case.

SMITH:

Okay. I know they don't have any derogatory, but I'm saying you're finding nothing, a large percentage you have no information about one way or the other. And you assume, because you have no information, that there's nothing derogatory. Is that right?

RODRIGUEZ:

We have other sources of information, in order to check the veracity of the information that they're giving us in the interview context.

SMITH:

Okay. And by information, I'm not talking about general country conditions. I'm talking about on that specific individual, are you saying that, in most cases, you have no third-party independent data?

RODRIGUEZ:

Part -- part of what -- no, it depends on what you're calling third -- in other words, it is true most of them will not appear in the databases, because they've done nothing wrong, in those cases. We do have...

SMITH:

Right. But if we have -- you don't know for sure whether they've done something wrong or not. Is that correct? There's no way to guarantee that they don't have something in their background that would be suspicious?

RODRIGUEZ:

We can never in -- we -- we can never 100 percent eliminate risk in anything that we do in this life. That is a truth. The fact is that we do have a very intensive process to mitigate risk in this particular case.

SMITH:

Right. But, again, I think you answered my question, is that you said the great majority are individuals about whom you have no specific independent data about.

RODRIGUEZ:

We have other documentation with which to check the information that they're giving us in their interviews. That -- that is really the point that I'm trying to make, sir.

SMITH:

Yeah. And, I guess, I'm saying, again, and I don't hear you contradicting it, yes, you don't have any negative. But I'm saying you don't have any information whatsoever on a majority--

RODRIGUEZ:

No, we do, because they -- the individuals bring extensive government -- often bring extensive government documentation. We interview multiple family members. We interview multiple members of communities.

So there is actually a benchmark with which to test the information that they're giving us in interview. That -- that's -- I think that's pretty accurate.

SMITH:

But, again, that's -- that's general information. It's not necessarily about that specific individual.

RODRIGUEZ:

It is both general information and specific, individual. About that individual, about that individual's community, about that individual's family unit.

SMITH:

But -- but, again, you said most you had no specific information about that is negative, shall we say?

RODRIGUEZ:

That is correct. That is correct.

SMITH:

But, again, you don't know whether there could be something else out there that is negative that you don't have access to?

RODRIGUEZ:

Certainly, if they're -- if -- if they're not in the -- if the derogatory information about them is not in the databases, then, yeah, we wouldn't know it unless we got it--

SMITH:

Okay. That's what I'm looking for. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Mr. Smith.

Mr. Keating is recognized.

KEATING:

And thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'd like to thank all of you for your service to our country in helping us keep us safe. I did have a question, and it's really important. And I think the Ranking Member was going down this line of concern by the Committee. And that's the resource concern.

And one of the things that I wanted to ask, I guess, Assistant Secretary Bond, or anyone else who could answer this, is the fact that we're reviewing social media, now, but do we have enough linguists available to do the job right now?

I have a concern that, resource-wise, we're not there yet. Could you address that? Is that a problem of resources for you?

BOND:

In terms of our ability to vet documents, social media, other information that's in the local language or in another language, for the most part, our consular officers are trained in the language of the country where they're working.

And we also have local employees, who are, you know, fluent in -- in the language and often assist with interpretation and other things. If -- if need be, we would be able to hire additional people.

In the case of the State Department's Consular work, we are fee- funded. And we -- we would be able to find the resources, if we -- if we needed to amp them up. And...

KEATING:

Well, I -- I thought we are expanding in those areas, beyond the pilot. So if we are, is there enough in the pipeline?

BOND:

Let me ask the colleagues from DHS to talk about their programs.

RODRIGUEZ:

Sir, from the perspective of U.S. CIS and, for example, the social media screening, as we increase the capabilities in that area, we do have access to language assistance contracts, in whatever the relevant languages might be.

I think you understand that our funding model is fundamentally different than everybody else at this table. The work with do, with respect to refugees and asylees, that the resources for that are drawn from the fees that we collect from fee-paying immigrants, be they naturalizing citizens, green card holders...

KEATING:

All right. Let me just rephrase it then. Do you have enough linguists? Forget about your ability to get...

RODRIGUEZ:

We -- we -- we have access to enough linguists...

KEATING:

For the expansion?

RODRIGUEZ:

... in the -- in the near term, we do have enough linguists.

KEATING:

What about if we're planning an expansion, which is what I'm hearing, do you have enough that you're getting in the pipeline now for this expansion?

RODRIGUEZ:

What -- what...

KEATING:

Or is there gonna be a clogging of that pipeline?

RODRIGUEZ:

What we are building right now, yes, we do have access to enough resources. We are assessing what our long-term needs are gonna be, Congressman, to directly answer the question I know you're trying to ask.

KEATING:

Thank you. I have a question, too. I mean, there's a difference, you know, with the refugees that are coming in. They don't have the same constitutional rights that an American has.

So, along the lines, Assistant Secretary Bond, with the interview process, I'm curious, have you tried to incorporate technology into that process, in terms of lie detection and other issues for this? Were those things implemented at all in the interview status, in the interview process?

Because we use those in our country, you know, if there's a waiver of someone's -- and I was a district attorney before, you know, doing investigations. And we incorporate those things here. Are they being incorporated as part of your vetting process?

BOND:

Sir, if you're asking specifically about the interviews of the refugees, that is a program that is -- that, again, we all keep going back to our friend, Mr. Rodriguez. But it is his agency that does those interviews. I can answer questions with respect to...

KEATING:

Okay. I apologize.

Mr. Rodriguez? I'm sorry. Thank you.

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. And I think your question is, do we have enough resources for this?

KEATING:

No. It's are you incorporating technological devices and equipment, that are pretty advanced now, in terms of lie detection, as part of that process?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah, I would not talk about the specifics of how we use technology in -- in an open hearing, sir. I -- I would be happy, in a closed setting, to describe what -- what we're doing, what we're thinking about doing. But I would not venture into that area in this -- in this setting.

KEATING:

Okay. I can understand the classified side. However, the person that -- I understand it. But I think you're being a little broad in answering -- not answering the question, because the people that are going through it are gonna know that it's there. So it's not gonna catch people by surprise. But we'll go there...

RODRIGUEZ:

So, yes, I mean...

KEATING:

I'll do that in classifieds.

RODRIGUEZ:

... do we use polygraphs in the refugee setting? The answer is no, more directly. There are other - - again, there are other things that I think you would want to know about that I would not try to discuss here. But if your direct question is, are we using polygraphs, the answer is no.

KEATING:

Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to quickly, in a few seconds, the timeframe for moving some of these pilots for the social media review in these critical areas, can you give us just an idea, a timeframe when you'll be able to expand and how much in the future?

RODRIGUEZ:

Right now, we are conducting manual vetting. In other words, we're literally just going into Facebook and Google and other sources to -- to identify the social media information. That's very slow going.

So, in the short term, we're going to be focusing adding as quickly as we can, just for the Syrians, as soon as possible, so we cover as much of that 10,000 that we're seeking to admit this year, as we can.

Longer term, we're looking for technological solutions that will permit us to look at that more broadly. And I don't know what the timeline's going to be for actually identifying and deploying those technological solutions more broadly.

KEATING:

Well, thank you. My time is up. And thank you, again, for your service.

MCCAUL:

I think, you know, if I could just add to that. In our Visa Waiver Bill, we did put that the department needs to look at these new technologies for truth detection, if you will.

Mr. Rogers from Alabama.

ROGERS:

Thank you.

Mr. Taylor, back in October, we had Director Comey from the FBI here. And he was asked if he could tell us, with a high degree of certainty, that he, through the vetting process, could assure us that ISIL would not be able to move some of their terrorist members into our country through these refugee movements.

And he, basically, said no, that the problem was we didn't know what we don't know. And here we are four months later and, to my knowledge, we're still in that same situation. So why are you insisting that we continue to visit this topic of this 10,000 refugees?

TAYLOR:

Well, sir -- sir, I believe there are two questions. I'll ask Dr. Rodriguez to answer the question on the refugee screening, which is more in his line. But I believe what Director Comey was referring to was the data that he had available within the FBI and within the intelligence community about this particular population.

We know a lot more today about this population than we did when he testified, back in October. And we continue to learn every day. That's our system. I wouldn't want to go specifically into how that knowledge base grows, but it grows every day.

It has grown since -- since 9/11. I welcome the opportunity to, in a closed session or another session, to speak to that capacity.

ROGERS:

Well, it grows, because we had a lot of room for improvement. The problem is, we still can't say, with a high degree of certainty, that they won't be able to sneak ISIL members in through those groups.

And -- and I gotta tell you, Mr. Rodriguez, I've been here -- this is my fourteenth year to be honored to serve in Congress. I haven't heard an opening statement from a witness I disagree with more than yours.

I don't know why in the world you think that we should have a sense of urgency to accept these refugees, moral or otherwise. The fact is, the refugees who have left Syria are no longer in danger. Our moral obligation is to help make sure they have a place to stay, healthcare, food, until we get them safely back into their country.

We have millions of them in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey. I can understand why you think we would want to be good Americans, like we always are, very generous Americans, and help them in those areas, but why should we move them into our country? I can't understand why you think that's necessary.

You know, one of the things that came up in the hearing when Director Comey was here, was we had a group of refugees that came up through South America, through Mexico, and came to our Southern border and turned themselves in and wanted asylum.

Now, those people weren't in danger. They were looking for economic opportunity. And that's what I think is happening with a lot of these people. We are -- and it's happening in Western Europe, as well.

These people are not -- once they're out of Syria, they're not looking for safety anymore. It's all about economic security. I had the ambassador from Romania in my office this morning, along with a member of Parliament, and I asked them, as they were talking about the migration issues have really upset Western Europe and Eastern Europe.

And I asked them. I said, "Well, have you all had a problem with refugees in Romania?" He started laughing. He said, "We're way too poor. The only refugees that have come to Romania, were there by accident. And once they realized they were in Romania, they left and went to Germany or some place with economic opportunities."

So tell me why we're focused on this, instead of removing Bashar Al-Assad from power, so these people can go back home? Why are we not working on helping the refugees stay in their neighborhood, and encampments, or in cities, and bringing them into our country, where they -- where we know ISIL intends to use them to kill us?

RODRIGUEZ:

So I think an important starting point for this discussion is the fact that, since September 11th, we have admitted 785,000 refugees. One hundred and twenty-eight thousand of those have come from Iraq.

A number of them have come from other places where there is, in fact, an active terrorist threat, Somalia, other parts of North Africa. Not a single one of them has actually ever engaged in an active attack on the homeland. There have been plots that have been disrupted by a U.S. law enforcement...

ROGERS:

And what percentage of that number has happened in the last few months, since Paris and since we've had the problem -- the attempted attack in Berlin, or the attack in San Bernardino?

You're conflating this into a completely different picture. The world has changed dramatically over the last several months, and you know that. We now have to be focused on where ISIL is and the efforts they're using to get people in this country now.

I agree, we're a country of immigrants. We've had a great, rich history with immigrants. But we have a new dynamic right now, and that -- that is not relevant. What you're describing is not relevant to this dynamic.

RODRIGUEZ:

I guess, congressman, where you and I do actually disagree, and I appreciate you highlighting the disagreement, is I do not believe that refugee admission is purely a moral and humanitarian undertaking. It is that, but it is much, much, much more. It has a critical strategic, national security and foreign policy role.

If we are not seen as offering opportunity to the very victims of ISIL and al-Nusra, then we will have given away a vital part of the battlefield...

ROGERS:

Why do we owe them opportunity?

RODRIGUEZ:

I'm sorry?

ROGERS:

Why do we owe them opportunity?

RODRIGUEZ:

Because, right now, those individuals are displaced. They may be safe over the short-term. There are 400,000 children who are not going to school...

ROGERS:

And we can provide them opportunity for safety in their neighborhood, in Turkey, in Jordan, in those areas. We don't have to have them in our country to make sure they stay safe, well-fed, and cared for.

RODRIGUEZ:

And that is, certainly, one reason why the numbers that we are taking are relatively small, compared to the overall number who are in refugee status. And it is something that we are doing alongside the other English-speaking countries that have made commitments to accept refugees, the other European countries that have made commitments.

That's also critical. We need to work with our allies to deal with this problem together. We cannot place ourselves in a posture where we're saying it is their problem and not -- and not ours. That, in my mind, actually does have a national security implication, if we do not look at it that way. But I -- but I understand, that is a point on which you and I disagree, sir.

ROGERS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

Chair recognizes Mr. Langevin.

LANGEVIN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank the panel for your testimony today and the work you're doing to protect the American people. General Taylor, Secretary Bond, you've both highlighted some processes that the federal government is implementing, or has already implemented, to tighten screening of these applicants and refugees.

And I think we can all agree that this is a -- this is vital to ensure that security reviews are as thorough as possible and thorough enough to flag any applicant with derogatory information in the government databases.

However, I remain concerned about applicants for whom there is no U.S. source intelligence, but for whom there may be intelligence from our partners. Do you share these concerns?

What barriers remain to our free flow of information between counter-terrorism agencies here and those broad, particularly in Europe, which I know has stricter, or different, privacy laws that we have that may restrict that information sharing.

And we've had testimony, both in classified and open sessions, expressing that -- that concern. But what can we do to remove them?

TAYLOR:

Congressman, thank you for that very pertinent question. And I think I would start out with the legislation that recently passed in December, which has strengthened the Visa Waiver Program to include the HSPD-6 requirements for information sharing, which not all countries in Visa waiver were -- had an HSPD-6 agreement with -- with the United States.

By the end of this year, all countries will have that agreement. And I think that strengthens the intelligence in law enforcement exchange that is so vital to this global problem. The one thing that has been crystal clear to me is that terrorists do not honor borders. They do not honor law enforcement.

They move as anywhere that they believe that they can move with impunity. And the way in which information sharing allows our governments and our allies to be more effective in spotting those movements.

And, so, that exchange is rich. It's continuing. And I sense a new sense of urgency in our partners, particularly in Europe, to collect the data that is necessary to protect their country. And, in collecting that their country's -- collecting that data, make that data available to U.S. authorities on a reciprocal basis.

LANGEVIN:

So, under the agreement, that you're saying are going to be in place by the end of the year, that you're confident that that takes care of all the problems? There would be no barriers...

TAYLOR:

Hopefully, sir.

LANGEVIN:

... to the information sharing on the European side, that they need to change their laws in any way to accommodate more robust intelligence sharing?

TAYLOR:

All I can say is, we've made it very clear to our partners in the Visa Waiver Program that a necessary ingredient in that agreement for Visa Waiver is that we have an information sharing agreement and that we're insisting on it.

That begins a process. It's not an end game. But, you know, these relationships grow over time. But the framework for those relationships will be in place with all of the countries that we currently have Visa Waiver agreements with.

LANGEVIN:

Okay, thank you. Secretary Taylor, in your testimony, you state that the department recognized the technological advances and the evolving nature of the threat environment required to continuously reevaluate and improve our screening and vetting process.

Can you further elaborate on how you're evaluating, and how you can enhance the way the department elicits information from applicants, identify new kinds of data that might be valuable, and developing new methods to efficiently incorporate this data into the department's systems?

TAYLOR:

Well, I would answer that in two ways. First, this Committee has been very supportive of the initiative of the secretary to create a DHS data framework. And, for that framework to be effective in sharing data across all of our components, as opposed to just individual components, which is a big step towards how we organize ourselves to use information that may be available in one component that's not available in another. So, that's the first step.

The second step is these issues are becoming much more complicated. And, in many cases, components will solve their -- their initial issue that they want to do with social media, but not solve a more broader issue.

So, we've -- our task force is designed to create, really, a center of excellence for -- for vetting in the department, where we are continually striving to look for new techniques, tools, processes that help us get better at this, not at a sub-optimal level in our components, but as a department. And that's our goal, going forward.

LANGEVIN:

Yeah. I think it's essential to be -- to be nimble, and to recognize this technology, especially it changes so rapidly that we're doing everything we can to incorporate those new capabilities into our vetting system to...

TAYLOR:

That's our -- that's the secretary's direction, and we're moving with all deliberate speed.

LANGEVIN:

Very good.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

MCCAUL:

Mr. Duncan from South Carolina.

DUNCAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to refute one thing that Mr. Rodriguez just said. There hadn't been an act of terror. I won't refute it, but I want to applaud law enforcement actually stopping the acts of terror that could have been committed by refugees that have been granted refugee status in this country.

January 7th, Texas and California. Prime examples of Iraqi refugees, granted refugee status in this country, 2006, 2009, whatever the year was. Law enforcement got -- got it right. They actually stopped it, and I applaud them for that.

I thank you, men, for your service. But the glaring example that I just mentioned shows that if you don't vet refugees coming into this country, the potential, the possibility of an act of terror happening in U.S. soil from someone that comes from Iraq or Syria is real.

The -- last week, back in the district, I had an opportunity to testify before the South Carolina State Senate. Possibly the first time a United States Congressman has ever testified in the General Assembly of South Carolina, myself and Congressman Mick Mulvaney on the Syrian refugee issue.

South Carolina does not want unvetted Syrian refugees to locate in their state. But, yet, the Obama Administration continues to try to make that happen. Since the Syrian civil war broke out, the numbers I have are 2,693 Syrian refugees had been admitted into this country.

For the record, 53 of those were Christian, 33 were non-Muslim, the remaining of those were Muslim. Mr. Chairman, I'd like to submit, for the record, my testimony in South Carolina Senate last week.

MCCAUL:

Without objection, so ordered.

DUNCAN:

Thank you. In 2011, or '12, Mr. Chairman, you and I traveled to Afghanistan. And there, at a fort operating base, we met a gentleman that was assisting the United States military as a translator. His name was Hollywood.

After we left, we were contacted by a former member of Congress, Charles Djou from Hawaii, who served with that unit at that fort operating base, knew Hollywood well. Saw him want to pick up a gun and fight that Taliban, who was threatened by the Taliban for being an interpreter for this country.

Charles Djou asked us, former Congressman Djou, asked us to assist Hollywood with coming into this country under the asylum program for interpreters who help our country. It took over two years for this gentleman, who was verified by the General of the 3rd Army 10th Mountain Division, who was verified by the unit that he assisted, who had members of Congress writing letters for him, who had -- General Petraeus, for goodness' sakes, had met the gentleman and vouched for him.

Took two years to get that gentleman here under that program. We scrutinized his background. But we're going to allow unvetted Syrian refugees from an area that ISIS, who has declared war on the United States, whether we've declared war on them or not, has said they will infiltrate that refugee program, and also exploit the migration program in Europe,

And that's a whole other topic of foreign fighter flow, of Visa Waiver Program, of Schengen, of the ability for someone who has a long-term vision to get into Europe and eventually come into this country under those programs, but we're going to allow un-vetted Syrian refugees into this country?

These policies of the Obama Administration put Americans at risk, because we don't know who is coming into this country by allowing unvetted Syrian refugees. You guys can say we're doing the best job we can, we are vetting, but Director Comey refutes that.

He said we're trying to do better. We've got it on testimony. But we're not very good at it. We can't tell you that we vetted these folks, because the information isn't available. The records have been destroyed. They've been stolen.

Someone from Syria can travel into Turkey and for \$600 buy a new identity and a new passport. So, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate us continuing to raise awareness of this issue with Syrian refugees.

I'm amazed that an administration that wants to expand background checks for law-abiding American citizens exercising their second amendment, constitutional rights will refuse to do the background checks necessary on possibly Syrian refugees.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

MCCAUL:

I thank the gentleman.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Torres from California.

TORRES:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to begin by asking -- I would like to ask unanimous consent for statements from a coalition of faith-based and advocacy groups to be entered into the record.

MCCAUL:

Without objection, so ordered.

TORRES:

Thank you.

So, Mr. Rodriguez, Mr. Taylor, thank you so much for the briefing that we received yesterday, making yourselves available to us to brief us in a classified vetting. So I want to make sure that I understand this process.

As you know, I have been very involved in the refugees that were placed in my home city. I had meetings with them and -- about the interview process and asked them directly, from their perspective, so, what was their experience?

Two families, very young children. And one has a male that was, I think 15 or 16 years old when they started the process. He's 19 now, 19, 20 now. Now, social media for a three-year-old -- obviously, that three-year-old, unless it's an American three-year-old, like my one-year-old grandson, may not have a social media account, may not have a social media presence, right?

So, when we ask you to check all 10,000 of those through a social media process, that could be impossible. Is that -- can you explain that process to me?

RODRIGUEZ:

I don't think it would be impossible. There may not be a social media presence...

TORRES:

Right.

RODRIGUEZ:

... for all 10,000 of those individuals, but the capacity to determine that is something that's certainly within where we're trying to drive towards for the future.

TORRES:

Right. So, the male, the young male explained to me that for every one appointment, interview appointment, that the family had, he had two or three additional appointments.

Cell phone records, phone books, any information that he could provide to -- to the department was asked at -- in very different meetings to ensure that he was telling the truth, or to verify that he wasn't giving different types of statements.

Mr. Rodriguez, that interagency check that you were beginning to explain earlier, can you provide a little bit more detail?

RODRIGUEZ:

Sure...

TORRES:

Information on that...

RODRIGUEZ:

Sure, and I think the example you're citing, and I'm assuming that was a refugee interview overseas, but it may have been some subsequent activity here in the United States...

TORRES:

No, it was overseas.

RODRIGUEZ:

It illustrates the point that I was trying to make to Congressman Smith, which is we don't just hear that the person has to say. Where there are reasons to, we go beyond and look for documentation that either helps us explore issues that may exist or helps us corroborate information that is presented in the testimony.

Speaking specifically about the interagency check, and I'm not at liberty, in an open setting, to talk about everything that sort of sits behind that check. Everything that is queried as part of that check, but the point of the inter-agency check is it gives us a one-stop place to access all intelligence holdings, all law enforcement holdings that could carry, and in fact, in some cases, have carried, derogatory information about an individual. So that's...

TORRES:

I don't have a whole lot -- I don't have a whole lot of time. I do want to ask you, is it in the best interest of the U.S. to have a robust process there, overseas, rather than closing that process that would possibly encourage more Syrian refugees to take on a path to come through our southern border and present themselves, knowing that, once they're here, they're here. And we have to deal with them at our boarder.

RODRIGUEZ:

I think that's -- that's one -- another critical point, which is we can either have an orderly internationally-based system of migration, where we're working together with our allies and create an actual opportunity for permanent resettlement, or we can have hundreds of thousands and millions of people, who are displaced, without any prospect of immediate settlement, meaning their kids don't go to school. They don't have any kind of economic security. That will have consequences for the entire world, if we allow that to happen.

TORRES:

Thank you.

My time has expired, and I yield back.

MCCAUL:

Mr. Barletta from Pennsylvania.

BARLETTA:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Director Rodriguez, my constituents in Pennsylvania are worried about their safety when they hear the refugees are coming into the Commonwealth, because they simply don't trust the vetting process. And, to be honest with you, I have a lot of concerns, too. And here's why.

Here in this Committee, quoting the former FBI Assistant Director, Tom Fuentes, "Our human" - - and this is his quote -- "our human resources in Syria are minimal, and we don't have a government we can partner with, and that's a key thing."

Two, National Counterterrorism Center Director, Nicholas Rasmussen, explained that the intelligence picture that we've had of this Syrian conflict zone isn't what we'd like it to be. You can only review data which you have.

Three, FBI Assistant Director Michael Steinbach said that the concern in Syria is that we don't have the systems in place on the ground to collect the information. All of the datasets, the police, the intel services that normally you would go and seek that information from don't exist.

And, four, FBI Director James Comey said, "We can query our databased until the cows come home, but nothing will show up, because we have no record of that person. We can only query what we -- what you have collected."

My question to you is, can you confirm to us today that not one single refugee who doesn't show up on our databases is admitted into the United States?

RODRIGUEZ:

I -- I think that's the point that I was -- if -- if you don't who up on the databases, it means there isn't derogatory information. It means we don't have...

BARLETTA:

Oh, that's not true. No -- I -- I -- I don't think anybody here believes that. I don't think any -- it's we have no database to check doesn't mean that -- that -- that there is no history. We have no records, or we cannot count on a Syrian government to give us that database.

So that doesn't mean that nothing exists. It means that we just don't have any database to collect that information. I don't think anybody here believes that.

RODRIGUEZ:

Well, I -- I think one of the key parts that I've been trying to emphasize --

BARLETTA:

And this is why -- this is why the American people don't trust us allowing people in here, because they don't think we're getting a straight story.

RODRIGUEZ:

I think I -- if -- if -- if I had a couple moments to describe the entire process, which is a lengthy process, that currently...

BARLETTA:

No, but I -- I would like you to answer my question first.

RODRIGUEZ:

And -- and...

BARLETTA:

Can you confirm today that not one single refugee from Syria will be admitted into the United States if they don't show up on a database? Can you confirm today that not one person will be allowed in?

RODRIGUEZ:

If -- if they -- if -- there are people who have been admitted who haven't shown up on databases, but...

BARLETTA:

Okay.

RODRIGUEZ:

... that doesn't mean we don't take other steps...

BARLETTA:

That doesn't mean -- that doesn't mean...

RODRIGUEZ:

... that there are other things we do to satisfy ourselves that the person we are admitting does not pose a threat. So I think you need to hear how the whole process works, before focusing on one element of the process, as...

BARLETTA:

See, it only takes one person. Doesn't -- doesn't take an army. Your family, my family, every single person here family -- that family is the most important people in the world to you. It only takes one person.

I don't think we should allow one single refugee into the United States if we cannot confirm factually that we have checked the database, and we can confirm that that person does not possess a -- an intent or a threat to the -- to the American people.

I want to go on, because I -- I got the answer I wanted there. And I've been saying, since I've been -- been in Congress, that -- that -- and I know sometimes I sound like a broken record, that the 9/11 Commission report taught us many times that -- that the best weapon that terrorists have is a valid travel document, because terrorists want two things -- they want to get into the country, and then they want to stay here just long enough to -- to carry out their mission.

And -- and more than 40 percent of -- of illegal immigrants that are present in this country came here legally. And they have their visa expire, and then they never left. And we can't find them.

You know, if your state is home to an international airport, I believe you're a border state. Of approximately 400 individuals who have been convicted in the United States, as a result of international terrorism-related investigations, conducted from September 2001 through March 2010, approximately 36 were visa overstays.

I don't believe there's a -- there's a strong enough deterrent to -- for anyone who wants to overstay their visa. And that's one reason I introduced a bill of visa overstay, which -- which brings the visa overstay laws in line with current law for crossing a border unlawful. Makes them parallel, making it a crime to overstay your visa and is more of a deterrent.

Under Secretary Taylor, would you agree that tougher penalties and clarity in the law will help agents perform their jobs? And -- and do you think we need to have a tougher deterrent than we -  
- than exists right now for those who are thinking of overstaying their visa?

TAYLOR:

Sir, at this point, what I would say is that the department, for the first time in history, produced a visa overstay report that had been asked for from this Congress for many years. This is an area of great concern for our secretary, and he's directed CBP and ICE to work on potential solutions that would deter individuals from wanting to overstay their invitation to our country.

I'm not in a position today to tell you what that's gonna look like, but I know that that direction has been given. And I'm sure the secretary will be happy to address that issue, once he's had a chance to have his team consult on it.

BARLETTA:

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

Mr. Perry from Pennsylvania.

PERRY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Gentlemen, Lady, thank you, very much, for your time here today.

Mr. Rodriguez, can you tell us the last time you read the National Security Strategy?

RODRIGUEZ:

I'm not sure I have read the National Security Strategy. I'll acknowledge that.

PERRY:

Okay. So I'm looking at your -- at your resume, here. It was provided to us, and I'm assuming it's correct. It goes back to 1997. I see that you spent some time in Pennsylvania, but I don't see any foreign -- any service in -- in foreign countries or with the State Department or whatever.

And the reason I bring this up, as I listened to your opening statement, I found it breathtaking that you lecture and suggest to the United States Congress, the representative of the people, that this refugee program is a vital part of foreign policy and national security.

And while I appreciate your opinion in that, that is wholly out of your purview, sir. Your job, as director, is to carry out the policies therein prescribed. And, so, while you're trying to impose a narrative on -- on America, through its representatives and make us somehow feel bad that we don't agree with you, I just want to say, for the record, you seem completely out of your lane in that regard.

With that, I'm looking at Privacy Policy for Operational Use of Social Media. Are you familiar, sir?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yes, sir.

PERRY:

Okay. So if I go to D, Rules of Behavior, Number Five, it says respect the individual's privacy settings and access only information that is publicly available, unless the individual whose information the employee seeks to access has given consent to access it.

Can you tell us how this policy enhances to the fullest extent capable the security and safety of the United States?

RODRIGUEZ:

That -- that is a generalized social media use policy that you're talking about. In fact, we are, as part of the work that we're -- when we are querying social media, we are querying without the active consent of the individual. We are extensively querying the social media accounts.

PERRY:

So is this policy gonna change?

RODRIGUEZ:

Well, it -- this is -- this is the -- the -- sort of the ordinary baseline that you're looking at. In fact...

PERRY:

But shouldn't the ordinary baseline, even considering Barletta's questioning regarding databases and information that we don't have or we're relying on many systems, but arguably on the fidelity of the individual themselves, shouldn't the policy -- shouldn't the default setting be that we're gonna check everything? And we'll make exceptions when we don't need to check everything.

Because, it seems to me, the default setting is we give all these people the benefit of the doubt, unless we find something derogatory.

RODRIGUEZ:

I -- I think there's a more significant practical issue here, which is all we can access, all we have the technological tool to access, is the public-facing statements that individuals make.

We -- we -- we do not have a way to reach private communications...

PERRY:

And we -- we understand that. But the policy says, as a matter of fact, if I go further into this policy, which is Privacy Policy Guidance Memorandum, January 19, 2007 -- I'm assuming you're familiar, right?

It says here that it is -- "under this policy, DHS components will handle non-U. S. persons' information held in mixed systems in accordance with the Fair Information Practices, as set forth in the Privacy Act," thereby giving people that wish to come to this country, that we know little about, the same rights as every American citizen.

RODRIGUEZ:

That's one document among a series of policies that govern what we're doing. And, again...

PERRY:

Which policy countervails this?

RODRIGUEZ:

Well, we can certainly walk you through that. It's a set...

PERRY:

Do you know...

RODRIGUEZ:

... of both -- well, it's a set of both policies and practices that we have that have been issued, in particular, in the last year, which give us proactive authorization to look at social media accounts, as part of our security vetting for people we're admitting.

PERRY:

But is that the default setting, or is it that the exception, based on this policy from your agency?

RODRIGUEZ:

What I'm -- what I'm telling you is what we're doing, which I think is the most important thing. I -  
- I -- we can parse what the policies say. What we are doing is we are looking -- when we are  
looking at social media, we're looking at it...

PERRY:

You just said -- hold on a second -- when we're looking at social media. So I picture myself not as  
you. You're the director. I'm one of the folks out in the field, looking at policy statements. This is  
my job and it says, well, I have to treat all these people that I don't know anything about, don't  
know the culture, don't know the language -- could be a terrorist -- like every American citizen.

Unless I -- do I call you and say hey...

RODRIGUEZ:

Yes.

PERRY:

... I'm not sure about this one.

RODRIGUEZ:

But that's not what we're doing. What -- what I am telling you...

PERRY:

So...

RODRIGUEZ:

... is we are looking with -- with appropriate linguistic support, we are looking at these accounts,  
right now, without necessarily seeking the specific consent of the individuals.

TAYLOR:

Congressman, if I might...

PERRY:

Yes, sir.

TAYLOR:

... follow on from the director, this policy was written in 2012.

PERRY:

Correct.

TAYLOR:

It was promulgated by our privacy office. It was not promulgated as a part of a broader DHS strategy for the use of social media in our -- in our operations across the department.

One of the responsibilities the secretary has given to my task force is to rewrite our policy to bring it up to current standards, to make it...

PERRY:

When can we expect that? And what is the interim guidance, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman? What is the interim guidance? What do agents in the field, at this time, what is their guidance...

TAYLOR:

Agents in the field today...

PERRY:

... and when can we expect the changes?

TAYLOR:

... have 33 clear policy pronouncements -- and I can get those for you -- by their components, that outline their day-to-day use of social media. My intent is to have a policy before the secretary within the next month. It's on my -- my shopping list of things that I've gotta get done.

But this policy was written in 2012, as a baseline for how the department would use social media. Certainly, the environment and the technology has changed significantly since that policy was written.

PERRY:

Yes.

TAYLOR:

And that's why the secretary wants a comprehensive...

PERRY:

I -- I look forward to that information forthcoming.

TAYLOR:

Yes, sir.

PERRY:

Thank you.

MCCAUL:

Thank you.

Mr. Katko from New York.

KATKO:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We've had a robust discussion about the things you are doing to enhance the vetting process for refugees and for people coming into this country, in general. I want to flip it on the head a bit and talk about what we should be doing, because I think, in this instance, especially, and when it matters to national security, we need to strive for perfection at all times.

And that's why, General, I was very heartened by your comments, when you said that you're constantly rechecking the processes, how we can get better, because that's exactly the attitude we need to have.

So I -- I just have one pointed question for you, and then I've got a secondary question that's more general. And the question for you is, in enhancing the vetting process for mining the public access to the Internet, do you -- how much input are you getting from the private sector?

And I ask that because, in my role as chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, it's become apparent to me that Homeland Security, in general, in TSA in particular, do not do a good job -- a good enough job of looking at what's going on in the private sector.

Necessity's the mother of invention. There's a lot of good ideas out there. And I think sometimes Homeland Security's procurement process is somewhat insular, and it's preventing you from getting the ideas that are out there.

And I'll give you one example. There are public companies that do a terrific job with creating algorithms that they use in the private sector to mine the public access -- public sources over the Internet to vet people. And we're not doing that in -- on the Homeland Security level, and I think we need to.

So, with that, I'll just ask you that question.

TAYLOR:

Thank you, very much, for the question, sir. It's really a part of the charter I've been given by the secretary and our task force, not only to look at best-in-class within our department and within the government, but best-in-class in the private sector.

To that end, we've announced an industry day at the end of February, where we're going to invite folks from across the private sector to come in and tell us what's --what they're doing, how they're doing it, and how that might help us with the mission that we've set forth.

So we recognize -- as you know, I came back to government from the private sector, where there is a lot of innovation. And we should exploit that innovation, as we move forward in this effort. And that will be a big part of what we do.

KATKO:

Well, I applaud that. And I would like to hear -- have you report back to us what you're doing in that regard, because that is a somewhat of a sea change from how they viewed it in the past, and, you know, sticking with the same vendors and the same old ideas you're comfortable with are not how we're gonna solve this problem or get better at this.

TAYLOR:

It's not innovation. So...

KATKO:

Good.

TAYLOR:

... we'll be happy to come back to...

KATKO:

Right.

TAYLOR:

... as the task force develops.

KATKO:

I appreciate it. By the way, I take it all four of you agree that mining the public sources of the Internet is wholly appropriate when trying to keep our country safe. Is that correct? I think you all agree with that?

TAYLOR:

Absolutely.

KATKO:

And I just note for the record, everyone's nodding their head. And that's -- and I am glad to hear that. Now, with respect to -- switching gears a bit, we've talked a lot about the Kentucky incident, where Iraqi individuals slipped through the cracks and then plotted some terrorism activity here in the United States, before -- before they were caught and arrested and convicted.

And, obviously, that's of huge concern. Then, we also heard about, not so much a refugee process, but a more recent case of Tashfeen Malik, where we just didn't find out how radicalized she was before she got here.

So, obviously, there's gaps. There's problems. So instead of telling us what you've done, tell me what you've learned from those two cases. And I just throw it out to anybody. What you've learned from those two cases that you can do better, because in both of those cases we missed -- missed them, and one was, particularly, a refugee process, the Kentucky case.

Tashfeen Malik was a visa case. And in both cases, we missed it. Now, there's not -- I'm not criticizing, so tell me what we can do to make it better.

TAYLOR:

Sir, I -- I -- and I think it's been clear, from the Members of the Committee, everyone that sits at this table understands, personally and professionally, the challenge that we face, in terms of protecting this country from folks that would do her harm.

And our process is very clear. Every failure becomes an opportunity to learn. Every failure becomes an opportunity to develop new tech, techniques and procedures and to go back and examine it, just as we did in the private sector when we had failures. We'd go back, and we'd take a look and improve.

And every day, this system is evolving. Every day, because everyone in this business today understands that the American standard is it only takes one. And we don't want that one to happen. Unfortunately, a couple have, but our process is not to say, "We've got it." The process is to critically examine what we do, why we did it, why the failure occurred and adjust our processes and procedures to address that.

KATKO:

So, tell me, what -- in these two particular cases, if someone can answer me, in particular, what did you learn from those two cases?

TAYLOR:

We learned that potentially we should have, in the Malik case, which is why we're looking at the KIs and social media, that perhaps we didn't explore as many sources as we could have explored, although her private social media would not have been available.

And, so, we've begun the process of developing a system to do that. And, in the Kentucky case, we've gone back to look at the vetting. And the sources that we used for vetting, and they were not as extensive as they needed to be. And, since that case came to light, we have significantly enhanced the screening processes that are used in our intelligence and law enforcement partners for that purpose.

So, in each case, we do a deep dive, in terms of the -- what the failure was, figure it out, and adjust processes appropriately.

KUBIAK:

I'd just like to also point out that we aren't just learning from the incidents in the United States, but we're constantly evaluating those incidents as they occur around the world and partnering with our foreign law enforcement counterparts.

So, in the instance of Paris, we were involved, through our attache offices, in scrubbing the information that was being shared from law enforcement about the attackers and were able to make significant contributions back to that, while also tightening our own defenses.

And we'd be happy to give some much greater detail in a classified setting, so that we don't divulge methods and tactics in an open forum. But it's not just waiting for an event to occur in the United States, but it's proactively, through law enforcement and through our law enforcement capabilities, adjusting our tactics as the world evolves.

TAYLOR:

Sir, I'd add one more thing. And every week, I chair or co-chair with the secretary, our Counterterrorism Advisory Board. Every morning, I meet with the secretary on new intelligence that has come in.

And through the CATB, we challenge our components, based upon intelligence, based upon what's changing, what have we done differently. It's the first time in the history of our department that we've had -- and every component head sits at the table for accountability from our secretary.

So we've developed a counterterrorism posture that says intelligence is changing. We need to change, and we need to understand how that intelligence changes our defenses. And we do that on

a weekly basis. It's why we changed aviation security and lots of other things going forward. And that's been at the direction of the secretary.

KATKO:

Thank you.

And thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

Mr. Donovan from New York.

DONOVAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I thank each of you for what you're doing to protect our country. All the testimony we heard today was about reevaluating and improving our screening process with the visa applicants.

I'm concerned with another significant gap in our security, and maybe we could talk about that a little bit. It's been publicly reported that there's probably hundreds of thousands of stolen Syrian passports, some of which are actually blank.

And it's suspected that these documents are in the hands now of the Islamic State. We've heard about our counterparts in the European countries saying that there's a real industry in selling these false documents or stolen documents.

And at least two of the attackers in Paris, apparently, had false Syrian passports. And they entered the, excuse me, E.U. through Greece with them. This proliferation of genuine documents used maliciously by groups like ISIS presents a real challenge for our screening process.

I was just wondering is the information that's being reported confirmed? Is that the information that you're dealing with, as well? Because we're getting reports from the press about it. And, if it is, what are each of your agencies doing to deal or combat or address that issue?

TAYLOR:

Sir, I'd asked Mr. Kubiak to address that. I think the specifics are probably handled in a closed setting, as opposed to this venue. We are concerned about any false documents that could be used to move anywhere in the world. But we have systems to -- that we're working with, from an international perspective, to address that particular issue you outlined more fully. But I'd like to do that in a closed session.

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. If I may just jump in before Mr. Kubiak. We are aware of the issue that you're describing. I wouldn't say much more in this setting, but what I do want to say is that is a critical and well-developed component of our screening and that, as situations arise, we take specific steps with respect to those situations, like the one you just described.

And that's all, again, I would say in an open setting. But I essentially want to communicate we're on it, and we can talk about it in greater depth in a different environment.

KUBIAK:

Thank you for your question. Fraudulent documents are a critical part of the ICE investigative mandate, as we look at all illicit travel and illicit finance that funds illicit travel, as it occurs around the globe.

ICE has, and has had for a number of years, one of the world's most renowned forensic laboratories, which specializes, specifically, and is located not far from here if you -- if anyone would like to take a tour or get a view of it.

It has immense capabilities that are supplied to the United States government, to CBP, to our State Department colleagues, to CIS and to others on evaluating false documents, recording lost and stolen documents, like the ones that you're referencing, and promulgates that and shares that information and legitimate travel documents with other countries, so that we're able to up our defenses and know what the current entry documents are and -- and how the fraudulent documents, either fake or stolen real, are used in this network to supply criminals and terrorists, potentially, travel networks and travel capability.

Happy to give you, because it's such a big part of what we do, happy to give you a much more significant briefing in a classified setting, if we can.

DONOVAN:

Secretary (sic) Kubiak, you just mentioned how we share that information with our allies. Are our allies in the European Union, are they sharing their information with us, as well?

KUBIAK:

Yes, so it's a broad question, because types of information -- and, again, we could get into that in a different setting. But, yes, on passport requirements, we're getting information quite regularly from foreign governments that says this bank of passports are stolen, or this is a compromise, or this is a false document that we have identified and utilized and here's information that we have about others that may be similar.

And we're sharing that back and forth around the globe, some countries more so than others, obviously, and some more robustly than others. But, yes. And, again, we can include that in a briefing for you, as well.

DONOVAN:

Ms. Bond, I didn't want to leave you out if there was anything you needed to add.

BOND:

No, only to add that we -- we do work very closely on this and also participate in reporting any lost or stolen U.S. passport, for example. Once that's reported to us, we make sure that it's immediately registered with Interpol so that it's available to other nations and, of course, across the interagency.

DONOVAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

MCCAUL:

Mr. Hurd from Texas.

HURD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the panel.

And I'd just like -- want to start off by saying that the men and women that make up your organizations, I recognize the difficult task they're charged with. I recognize the environment in which they operate. And they should be commended for their hard work. Sometimes we get askew on policy, but the men and women in your organizations are trying to do everything to keep us safe.

Mr. -- Director Kubiak, what is a special interest alien? Can you explain that in a very -- as short a period as you can?

KUBIAK:

Sir, we use -- we talk about individuals from other countries. So, typically, now, what I refer to is an individual not from the western hemisphere who's coming in through, when we talk about smuggling networks, into the United States.

HURD:

When you talk about refugees, are you including asylum seekers in that category?

KUBIAK:

I would defer to Mr. Rodriguez on that, specifically.

HURD:

It's not a trick question, Mr. Rodriguez. I just want to be clear on the terms that we're using.

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. No, the -- a refugee is an individual who lives abroad who is making a claim for protection. An asylee is making a protection under the same basic legal construct, but they're doing it...

HURD:

But they're doing it here.

RODRIGUEZ:

They're in the United States.

HURD:

And -- and that's where I'd like to focus my three and a half minutes on. Can you describe the difference between the vetting that goes on between asylum seekers and refugees? Because my understanding is a refugee overseas is going to a number of refugee camps sponsored by UNHCR. They go through about a year of -- of vetting. Then State Department does vetting. Then DHS does vetting.

Those asylum seekers that are showing up, who is doing the vetting of that asylum seeker, if they're coming from one of the countries where they're designated as a special interest alien?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. And that's a key point. It depends on what country. The answer to your question depends on what country they're from. When they are from the countries of particular concern, virtually all of the process ends up being the equivalent of the process that occurs overseas, in terms of the kinds of interviews, the preparation for the interviews, the kinds of checks that are done.

However, in that situation, it is often a joint undertaking between us and our partners at ICE and also our partners at Customs and Border Protection, a lot of that depending on how it is we encounter the individual. Do we encounter them at the port of entry, or is it a situation in the interior?

HURD:

That person that's seeking asylum, where are they when you are going through that process?

RODRIGUEZ:

They could -- again, they could be -- well, where are they meaning -- I think your question is, are they in the community. That is...

HURD:

Are they in a detention facility, or are they released on their own recognizance to a family member or someone in the community while you're doing your vetting?

RODRIGUEZ:

Depending on the facts and circumstances, it can be any -- any of the above. If they're at a port of entry, that's something that Immigrations and Customs Enforcement makes the determination as to whether that individual will be -- will be released or not.

My understanding is they don't do it if there is any concern in that case about doing it.

HURD:

And how long does that vetting process take, average? I know every case is different. Are we talking two weeks? Are we talking two months? Are we talking a year?

RODRIGUEZ:

I -- I would not attempt to give an actual. I think it incredibly variable, depending on the country, the nature of the case, the composition of the family. It can be incredibly variable. So I don't think I'd be able to give you any kind of credible average time for it. I don't know if Mr. Kubiak has anything to add to that.

KUBIAK:

No, that's correct. It's -- it's very specific to the circumstances of the individual, the situation that they've arrived in the United States, and then what -- what process they're going to undergo next.

HURD:

So you all are saying that the level of vetting of asylum seekers is on par with the level of vetting that a refugee goes through?

RODRIGUEZ:

That the tools we use are -- are -- are just about the same tools that we use overseas. And, again, in a different setting, we can go into detail as to how that's done.

HURD:

Great.

Ambassador Taylor, it's always a pleasure to see you. Are you getting enough intelligence on human smuggling organizations, or human trafficking kingpins in places like Ecuador, Brazil, Columbia, Panama, Guatemala, and Mexico? Because those are the networks that are going to be facilitating folks from the countries that are going to try to do us harm, to take advantage of our asylum program.

TAYLOR:

I am getting significant intelligence through our ICE organization and from the intelligence community. It's not perfect information, but certainly it is an area of very high priority for us, in terms...

HURD:

On -- on the national -- on the national intelligence priority framework, do you think the human smuggling is high enough on that list?

TAYLOR:

I wouldn't say that it needs to be high enough on that list. It needs to be a high focus for our department. And whether it's on the priorities framework or not, it is the bread and butter of what we do. And...

HURD:

Amen.

TAYLOR:

... so we have focused on that to a great extent. And much of the intelligence about migration and that sort of thing comes from our law enforcement partners, from CBP and from ICE, that goes into the IC.

So it is our responsibility. We are working hard on better understanding that phenomenon and interdicting, as appropriate.

HURD:

Good. Copy.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

Thank you.

Mr. -- Ms. McSally from Arizona.

MCSALLY:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for your testimony and the work that you're doing to try and keep our country safe. I've heard of a lot of discussion, and I know some of this you can't answer in this setting of things that are being discussed or debriefed or best practices, things that are about to be put into place.

I realize well-intentioned, but there's also bureaucratic barriers, right, to moving things quickly. And I've often said, you know, ISIS is moving at the speed of a broadband, while we are moving the speed of bureaucracy. And, you know, some of those are challenges that you all deal with, as you're trying to move things forward.

But, just to be clear, and I know you don't get into detail, have we made changes to the K1 program since the Malik case in San Bernardino? Like, are there changes now in place? You can tell us what those changes are or classified, but do we currently have changes in place, based on what we learned from the failures in that case?

RODRIGUEZ:

I wouldn't say -- I would say that the -- the case made us look at the process all over again, and we identified new opportunities to do better.

MCSALLY:

But are -- is it -- is there something changed now, or are...

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. No, no.

MCSALLY:

... we still looking at it?

RODRIGUEZ:

That's one of things I...

MCSALLY:

Yeah.

RODRIGUEZ:

... want to drive at. So -- so our -- and then I'm going to turn it over to Assistant Secretary Bond. Our primary, sort of, lever in that process is at the time that the individuals seek green cards.

And, so, what we are doing, we are gonna use it for K1, but, frankly, we're gonna look at this, really, across all immigration categories, is how we more strategically use the interviews that we conduct when -- when we give green cards.

MCSALLY:

Yeah, so, and I don't want to spend a lot of time on that, because we've talked about it already. I just -- again, I -- what we are doing or gonna do versus has something changed today?

RODRIGUEZ:

No, that's something that's different now.

MCSALLY:

Okay. Okay.

RODRIGUEZ:

So we're gonna be -- we're gonna be using those more intensively, more -- in a more strategic and targeted way with enhanced lines of questioning to target the kinds of issues that I know we're worried about.

MCSALLY:

Okay. Great. Thank you. I want to reference -- it's a little bit off the main topic of the terrorism, but, again, also, challenges in bureaucracy of the IG report that came out a couple weeks ago about, again, just information sharing not happening related to human trafficking victims being trafficked into the country using our legal systems.

The IG report identified 17 of 32 instances where known human traffickers used work and the K1 visa process to bring victims into the country legally, because information sharing between organizations wasn't what it needed to be.

And 274 individuals -- I'm reading out of the IG report -- subjected to ICE human trafficking investigations who successfully petitioned USCIS to bring 425 family members and fiancées into the United States.

They're using the legal system, human traffickers, to bring victims into the United States, or family members. We marked up a bill yesterday to try and close these gaps, but has -- has something changed since this IG report, in place now, to -- to -- to fix these issues? This is travesty.

RODRIGUEZ:

Yeah. One, we embrace the recommendations that were made in the IG report. Long before the report was issued, we were doing things to make sure that Mr. Kubiak's agency, my agency, are communicating in order to be able to -- each other do our jobs best.

So that -- that -- that is the state of affairs, as we speak. I'm sure Mr. Kubiak can speak to that, as well.

MCSALLY:

Well, just one more question, again, about known challenges that we've had in the aftermath of the Boston bombers. One of the individuals arrested from Kazakhstan -- I'm sure you're familiar with this -- didn't have an I-20, a current I-20. He was on a student visa, but he actually left the United States and then came back in.

And he was let in. And the finding was, because CBP officers at inspection stations did not have access to ICE's Student and Exchange Visitor Information System. So -- so, again, this is information sharing within one organization, where the CBP guys checking him when he came in didn't have access, that he didn't have a current I-20 on file.

Has that been -- these are all just like stovepipe information sharing things. So has that been fixed?

KUBIAK:

I'd have to get back to you on that specific incident.

MCSALLY:

Well, I'm just saying, in general, like, daily, now. Are those -- does CBP now have access to that SEVIS system?

KUBIAK:

So the SEVIS system and the...

MCSALLY:

Yeah.

KUBIAK:

... ADIS system, which is driven primarily by CBP and a little bit of the biometric exit issue that we talked about yesterday, are connected and working together. So I'd have to get a little more detail, specifically, on what happened in that instance...

MCSALLY:

Yeah.

KUBIAK:

... that prevented that. But I'd be happy to get back to you on that.

MCSALLY:

Yeah, please, do. Again, it's a broader question of we've just got, you know, bureaucracy and stovepipes and information sharing that we've got to figure out how to speed that up.

And, so, we've got known cases, whether it's the traffickers here or, you know, or the one associated with the Boston bombing, where we've identified where information wasn't being shared. Have we fixed that for the long haul? And if you need to get back to me, that's great.

KUBIAK:

I'll get you that answer.

MCSALLY:

Thank you.

And I yield back.

BOND:

Could I just -- may I just add one thing to the question that you asked about the -- what's happened, as a result of the K1 review, because that was very much a joint operation. And we were looking at our piece of the K1.

So I do want to say that there -- there have been some actions that have already been taken. And, you know, not huge, dramatic, but we -- we spoke to the post that handle the largest numbers of fiance cases, got their SOPs and reviewed some of the standard things that they do working on these cases in high volume and have shared those ideas out broadly to other posts and said adopt these ideas to -- they'll make you more efficient.

They'll help you to ensure you're not overlooking anything in the process. So that is an example of something that has already taken place, as a result of the review.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Ms. McSally.

The Chair now recognizes the Gentlewoman from Texas, excuse me.

JACKSON LEE:

Let me thank the Chairman and Ranking Member, and to all the witnesses for your presence here today. And I know my colleagues have been extensive in their questioning, and, so, I will partly be engaging in some of my comments.

For those of us who have been consistent and untiring supporters of immigration and immigration reform and the values of this nation, that from my early upbringing centered around that magnificent lady in the New York Harbor, the Statue of Liberty. As a child, that's what I grew up on, and I understood this nation to be a refuge and to be a land of opportunity.

And, certainly, living in the skin that I live in, I have seen moments of those of us who live here experiencing a separate and segregated life and the questions of liberty and justice and opportunity have been a question for Americans.

So I understand some of the angst that has been exhibited by Americans, who may feel that jobs have been lost or security has been jeopardized. And I've always said that the privilege that I had of serving not only in this Congress, but in this Committee, which I take very seriously, even more we are the front lines of security of this nation.

And it is our job to counter the negative, the angry, and the wrong-headedness of some public officials who want to condemn the very entity of which this country has been based, a land of immigration and immigrants and a land of laws.

You, all, are the holder of this responsibility, along with the duty of protecting this nation. So, I am going to, having been in the Judiciary Committee and leaving for another committee, as we speak, I'm just going to ask all four of you to take the context of what I said, that this is a land of immigrants and the question of recognizing the concern of the security question.

And I'll start with you, Secretary Taylor, who were here before, and you are dealing with the social media. And so each of you will tell me what you're doing for those two points -- securing the nation -- you may want to weave in the social media context, how -- how -- that we are seriously using that as a tool, so that we can do right by those who legitimately come to this country for the values of this nation, and get those -- and I mean get those who come to do us harm.

Secretary Taylor?

TAYLOR:

Yes, ma'am. I'd be happy to start. First and foremost, the mission of our department and every person in our department is to stop people who want to come to our country to harm our citizens or our way of life.

It is how we have organized our screening and vetting. It is how we have built our partnerships with the intelligence community and law enforcement community. And, as you mentioned, we understand that our use of social media has not been as effective as it needs to be, which is why I'm leading a task force to add that piece of information to our screening and vetting.

One of your other colleagues had asked about how we adjust, because the enemy is adjusting, as we speak, in terms of tactics, techniques, and procedures. It is our everyday focus on how what we're doing mitigates the risk that we're seeing from intelligence and other activity.

That's what we do every day. It's our solemn responsibility to this country. The secretary has announced, from the day he started on the 23rd of December, 2013, that counterterrorism is the top priority of our department and every official in our department.

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you.

Mr. Rodriguez?

RODRIGUEZ:

Yes. We are -- we have had a number of robust tools in place, and we're -- we're fine-tuning and refining those tools, as we go along, to ensure that any of the actually millions of people who we screen each year do not pose a threat to national security, to public safety.

We use a series of tools. One of them is the interviews by very highly-trained officers, in particular refugee officers. And we're always seeking to refine their -- not only their training, but their preparation for the specific environment that they're addressing.

So if it's a refugee officer that's interviewing Syrians, we make sure that they are steeped in the country conditions in Syria. That, alongside all of the technological and intelligence tools that we both use and fine-tune, as we continue to do our work.

JACKSON LEE:

Mr. Kubiak?

KUBIAK:

Ma'am, thank you for the question. I outlined what we did for -- we're doing overseas and with the visa security unit earlier. So I'd just like to take a moment just to say that the key thing that we, that ICE, brings to our DHS and national security strategy is to identify those networks and those criminal organizations that are seeing every day a new way to exploit the security of the nation's borders.

And, working globally, to be able to circumvent that security and those protocols that we have to more illicit goods and illicit people and illicit finance, both into and out of the United States, whether it's to support terrorist finance, to support terrorist groups overseas, to obtain critical technologies or weapons in the United States and export them to other places, or whether it's to smuggle people and goods into the United States for nefarious purposes or criminal purposes.

And, really, our role is to identify those networks for the department, to attack those networks. Because you can try and stop and defend at the border, and -- but the goal is to push those borders out, so that we protect the homeland by being abroad and that we're identifying that entire network, and identifying it and disrupting it and dismantling it, as we move through, and then gaining that intelligence so that we can continue to harden our defenses.

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you.

KUBIAK:

We can't ensure everything.

JACKSON LEE:

Secretary Bond?

BOND:

Yes. In the course of reviewing and assessing each visa application, the consular officers are part of a team, really. We often talk about the officer who does the interview, but that person is not working alone.

Part of what we do is a very careful prescreening review of applications, in order to identify questions in the file and focus the time of the interview in the most valuable way. But in every office, we also have a unit specifically for fraud prevention.

When an officer has a concern about a case, they can review that case for what you could call a deeper dive by the fraud prevention team that will be looking into things. We do use social media in cases where we believe that that -- that that will give us the information we need to resolve questions that we might have.

And, along with our colleagues at DHS, also looking at how we can make broader and effective use of social media, too. But we really invest in the staff to ensure that they are thoroughly trained to take on the responsibilities that they have, in terms of personally interviewing and assessing the qualifications of every single visa applicant that comes to the window.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Ms. Jackson Lee.

JACKSON LEE:

Let me just thank you, Mr. Chairman and the Ranking Member. I always do that. And just say that I want us to remain a country of immigrants and laws and to keep our values that we've had that I have built this country. I yield back.

MCCAUL:

Thank you, Ms. Jackson Lee.

The Chair now recognizes the Gentleman from Texas, Mr. Ratcliffe.

RATCLIFFE:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I thank the witnesses for being here today, for your testimony, and for the work that you do every day to support the primary role of the federal government, that being to provide for the common defense and to keep America safe from evolving threats.

Right now, the evolving threat from radical Islamist jihadists are constantly on the minds of the nearly 700,000 Texans that I represent, and for good reason. The terrorist attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino and in other places prove that those extremists intend to exploit, if possible, both the refugee and the visa processes to carry out mass killings against innocent people here in the United States and -- and abroad.

So I know you'd agree with me. We need to utilize every tool in our arsenal to ensure that the people coming to the United States, whether it's through the refugee program, or through -- or on a visa, that they're properly vetted.

And, in that regard, we all fulfill our obligation, with respect to the federal government fulfilling its primary role, to keep our citizens safe.

So let me start and ask you a question, Under Secretary Taylor. Following the San Bernardino attack, there seemed to be a lot of confusion about whether or not, under current policy, DHS immigration officials are allowed to review open-source social media when considering visa applications.

I say that your predecessor, John Cohen, was on record as saying, "During that time period, immigration officials were not allowed to use or review social media as part of a screening process."

Now, following that, a spokesperson for DHS came out and said that the department had begun three pilot programs to include social media and vetting. And, then, following that, the President came out and, I think, in an effort to clarify, said that, and I'll quote, "Our law enforcement and

intelligence professionals are constantly monitoring public posts." And that's part of the visa review process.

So help me out. Help this Committee out here. What is the current policy, across the board, with respect to DHS immigration officials' authorization to use social media, as part of the vetting process for visa applicants?

TAYLOR:

Thank you for the question, Congressman. First, let me, as I mentioned earlier in this hearing, Mr. Cohen's suggestion that the secretary, or any department official, had prohibited the use of social media by any official in the department, as of 2014, it's just not true.

We've had a policy in place since 2012. There are 33 instances to-date where social media is being used by our components for the purpose of complying with their mission requirements.

The one thing that we learned, after San Bernardino and why the secretary asked me to take a review of all the social media use within our department, was that our efforts were not as robust as they needed to be and that we needed a comprehensive methodology within the department for the application of social media -- the use -- the vetting of social media for our mission.

And we're involved in that task force today. We've made recommendations to the secretary, in terms of how we plan to proceed. And I have a -- a work stream that I have promised to execute that will get us at a better place, in terms of where we are.

But there was no prohibition...

RATCLIFFE:

Okay.

TAYLOR:

... as of 2014, for any official in the department for the use of social media.

RATCLIFFE:

So let me ask you. You said it's been part of the policy since 2012. It's being used. Is it allowed, or is it required under that policy?

TAYLOR:

Under the policy from 2012, it set forth a framework, established by our privacy organization, in terms of how components should...

RATCLIFFE:

I'm just trying to get at, is it always used, every -- are we -- are we...

TAYLOR:

I wouldn't say...

RATCLIFFE:

... using it, as part of the process, or is it just a tool that...

TAYLOR:

I think what we've learned is that it's not comprehensively used. And part of that is the technology.

RATCLIFFE:

Don't you think it should be?

TAYLOR:

Absolutely.

RATCLIFFE:

Okay.

TAYLOR:

That's where we're leading.

RATCLIFFE:

And, so, part of your recommendation is that it's going to be required.

TAYLOR:

In a center of excellence for the department to ensure standardized, effective social media use across our missions.

RATCLIFFE:

Okay. If the Chairman will indulge me, I want to follow up with respect to that same issue, as it applies to refugees. FBI Director testified before this committee and said something to the effect that if someone never makes a ripple in a pond in Syria, you know, we can vet our database till the cows come home, but it's not gonna help us, because nothing's gonna show up.

And, so, I understand that we have a robust vetting system in place when people are in the database, but Secretary Johnson and Director Comey both have testified before this Committee that they lack the on-the-ground intelligence, in places like Syria, to confidently vet individuals.

So, Director Rodriguez, how does U.S. CIS incorporate social media, as part of vetting into the refugee admission program?

RODRIGUEZ:

What we are doing right now, and these efforts are focused on Syrians, is that in those cases in which there are flags of -- elements of concern in a case, we do a social media review, in those cases, to further develop and determine whether there's any information in social media which helps us resolve that case, either derogatory information that would lead, possibly, to a denial, or that would satisfy us that the individual was okay.

What we're building toward, in very quick order, including with the necessary both training and linguistic capacity to do this kind of review, is to use that across not only all Syrians, but also across all Iraqis, as well.

And that's -- we will -- we will start deploying that capacity, as we start hiring and training folks. We will be doing that in very short order. More importantly, we're gonna be looking at using social media across all other immigration categories, as well. A lot of that work's already done by Assistant Secretary Bond's folks at the Consular level.

We're looking at using, when we see people, for example, at the time of adjustment, there may be opportunities to do that work further at that stage, as well.

RATCLIFFE:

Okay. My time's expired, but so just so I'm clear, right now, what you're saying is it's allowed only if there's a red flag?

RODRIGUEZ:

No. It is -- it is -- it is being done. It is allowed in a much broader category, and we are authorized to build as quickly as we can to do it in much broader categories. I would view it as more active and directed, rather than as merely permissive.

RATCLIFFE:

Okay.

RODRIGUEZ:

That's an important distinction.

RATCLIFFE:

But, again, not required?

RODRIGUEZ:

No, no...

RATCLIFFE:

Allowed, but not required?

RODRIGUEZ:

Not -- not in all cases, only because we need -- we need to bring that capacity online, as fast as we can.

RATCLIFFE:

Chairman, I appreciate your indulgence for the time. And I yield back.

MCCAUL:

The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member.

THOMPSON:

Thank you, very much. And let me thank the witnesses for what I think was excellent testimony before the Committee.

Mr. Rodriguez, one thing that I think would -- the record would need to reflect is USIS' role in the refugee program. And there are a lot of questions about it, but in the process of the questions, I never felt that you got the chance to answer.

So can you give us the role that you play in this refugee process?

RODRIGUEZ:

Sure. Sure. And -- and I think the key starting place is that we are one of a multitude of agencies that are involved in the process. It starts with the U.N. High Commission on Human Rights, that first refers the cases to the State Department, who in turn -- and who, at that point, it's the first round of security checks are initiated by the State Department.

Both UNHCR and State Department conduct both information gathering and interviewing. We do the actual screening, meaning all that information that was gathered by UNHCR, and also by the State Department, is reviewed by our officers.

We conduct an interview, based on our knowledge of the country conditions, the countries where these individuals are coming from. We sift through the results of those background checks, in order to use that for interviewing purposes, where we do look at social media. We use that as a resource.

The burden is on the refugee -- that's kind of -- that's a critical point -- to demonstrate to us that, one, they qualify as a refugee, and that they are not inadmissible, for example, because they are a terrorist or they are aligned with terrorist organizations.

Then the case goes back to the State Department, that conducts both a medical screening and a cultural orientation. The database checking is going on a continuous basis from the first time the State Department initiates those checks, right up until and beyond the time that those individuals are admitted to the United States.

So if new derogatory information arises about those individuals, that pops. We learn about. Customs and Border Protection learns about it. State Department learns about it, so that we can take appropriate action in those cases.

We, then, see those individuals again, assuming that they are admitted, assuming we have not denied them for some reason. We see them again at the time that they apply for adjustment of status.

THOMPSON:

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MCCAUL:

I thank the Ranking Member.

And let me just close by saying that I commend the department, in the wake of San Bernardino, for forming this task force. In light of the 2012 policy, I know, General Taylor, you've taken some criticism. But moving forward, you know, it's the right thing to do, to come up with the modern day of social media and make sure that's part of the -- the vetting and screening process.

And, to the rest of the witnesses, I know it's not always a comfortable process. And it's not always painless, but it is our democracy. And this is the voice of the American people asking you questions. And I want to thank all of you for your patience and for your testimony here today.

The record will be open for 10 days. Members may have additional questions. And, without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.