

Hearing Transcript

Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Hearing on President Obama's Fiscal 2017 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security

February 24, 2016

HOEVEN:

I'll call this hearing of the Senate Appropriations Committee on Homeland Security to order. I want to begin by thanking the Honorable Secretary for Homeland Security, Secretary Johnson for being with us today. We appreciate it very much. We understand the demands in your schedule and so, we certainly appreciate you being here with us today. I'd like to welcome our Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen, it's good to be with you.

Also the full appropriation committee chairman who's here, Senator Cochran, thank you for joining us today. And Senator Mikulski, thank you for joining us as well.

We anticipate other members of the committee will be joining us as the hearing proceeds. And I would take a minute to defer to the Chairman of our Full Appropriations Committee, Senator Cochran, for any opening remarks that you might have, Mr. Chairman.

COCHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much and I'm happy to join you in welcoming our witnesses and others who are here today to help us understand the implications that are reflected in the administration's budget request for the Department of Homeland Security for Fiscal Year 2017.

The commandant of the Coast Guard recently testified that it processes actionable intelligence on approximately 90 percent of known maritime drug movement but they can only attempt to target and disrupt 20 percent of the known flow, that's kind of scary but it... [AUDIO GAP]

HOEVEN:

So we're going to address that, you know, across the full budget. Next to budget proposal is to cut immigration enforcement specifically detention operations by about \$350 million.

Now, that reduction is largely targeted at family residential centers but also reduces adult beds. The current population is thousands above the requested level, so we're already above that level in terms of current population.

And due to seasonality, the detained population is lower now than it's likely to be later in the year. Now, you are turning a corner and getting cooperation from state and local enforcement in honoring detainers and I know you've been working on that and it's very important, but that's also going to mean a need for more detention beds.

And so this is going to be another issue where we're going to have to figure something out. And so, to get these higher removal numbers, you need -- and you're going to need that detention capacity for your removal operations.

On top of that, the request cuts state and local preparedness grants in FEMA by \$560 million and that's something we want to talk about. Our state and local partners rely on those funds to be on the front lines in the war on terrorism, stable funding and measurable results are essential to these programs to avoid massive fluctuations in funding which have a ripple effect at the state and local effect -- at state and local levels.

Given the threat our country faces, this is a cut that we're going to have to restore for states and localities. As a result of those reductions, we're facing a very tight budget this year. I think a more challenging budget this year than last year.

And obviously, we're not going to be able to fund all of the things outlined in this budget but we are going to have some reprioritization in these areas that I have discussed.

We need your priorities, Mr. Secretary and your ideas for addressing some of these areas. And we'll be talking about those areas specifically today and getting your input.

I want to specifically understand your personnel costs, since salaries and benefits are your largest drivers, your largest cost drivers.

And then, we also have both attrition and you have areas where you're not able to fill the number of people that you need. (inaudible) agents for example, Secret Service, you know, areas where we've got to find ways to fill those slots.

Also, I want to continue our conversation regarding metrics, something you and I have talked about when we met recently. The department needs to do all it can to assess its needs and demonstrate its effectiveness through data and metrics. We need to be able to track that progress, whether it's determining the right mix of personnel and technology to conduct the mission or publicly reporting on border flows and enforcement action.

It's very important that we have that information. You and I have talked about. There's another area that I hope to drill into today is to talk about metrics and measurements and how you're doing that and what kind of progress that you're making.

So we'll go through that in some detail. Last, I'm going to ask for some updates on programs across the department. Some of these we've talked about.

I continue to support implementation of biometric exit and want to understand your plan and how we can be helpful in advancing that plan. Also, cyber security obviously a big focus for you and I think for everyone in Congress as well with what's going on.

In the TSA, we're going to want to talk about, we've got a new TSA director, I think he's the right person for the job and, so we're going to want to talk about how they're transforming their operations, personnel training and technology.

Again, I think they're -- he is providing good direction but we have to make sure that they are accomplishing their objectives and that we're tracking that progress.

I'll stop there at this point and turn to our Ranking Member, Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And welcome, Secretary Johnson, we're delighted to have you before the subcommittee again to talk about your request for the Department of Homeland Security.

And I should say at the outset that I share concerns about a number of the issues that Chairman Hoeven has raised. I do appreciate as we all do the diverse missions of the department and the millions of Americans whose lives are affected by the work that you do.

I think if anything, the mission may be getting broader because of the challenges that we face today. And I share Chairman Hoeven's concern about the administration's request, which really reduces funding for the department by about 40.5 billion dollars for operations in 2017.

Now, I guess I have several concerns about this, first has to do also with the proposed \$909 million in fees that have not yet been authorized, and while I appreciate that that's an important potential source of revenue, I think the politics of trying to get that done are really questionable. Second, I'm concerned about the reductions in the budget for FEMA state and local grant programs. They were a priority of the administration a year ago and yet they've been reduced by about 20 percent.

And finally, the proposal suggests that we are going to rescind \$120 million from emergency and disaster loans that CBO is -- at least in our interpretation is not likely to allow us to take as a discretionary offset.

So this means we start this budget process with a hole of that \$1.5 billion I think. So, I'm hoping that you can share some insights into how you made those trade-offs in the budget and what the expectations are for that.

Now, I do have some areas where I think the budget proposal is very positive, certainly with respect to strengthening our cyber security infrastructure that's very important, a 30 percent increase to do that will help not only our federal networks but it will help to as we're working with the private sector.

I'm also very pleased to see the department's continued efforts on countering violent extremism. I had the opportunity to watch the University of New Hampshire's peer to peer program presentation and it was very impressive, and really showed what young people can do in helping us as we're trying to address this challenge.

I also was pleased to see the request which fully funds FEMA's projected disaster response and recovery needs, given what's happening with the weather events in the country I think that's very important.

And finally, in closing, I do want to mention the heroin crisis that we're facing in New Hampshire and in so many states across this country, because while the Department of Homeland Security doesn't have direct responsibility to combat this problem, certainly the Coast Guard and CBP play critical roles in interdicting heroin and other drugs as they come across the border.

And so, I'm looking forward to hearing what more the department is thinking about in terms of helping as we try and address this problem. So I look forward to hearing your comments today, Mr. Secretary, and to seeing how this committee can work with you as we get a budget through that makes sense for the country and the department.

JOHNSON:

Thank you.

HOEVEN:

I'd like to thank both Senator Cassidy and Senator Baldwin for joining us and during at this point to see if there are any other opening statements starting with Senator Mikulski.

MIKULSKI:

Mr. Chairman, I've had a quick conversation with Secretary Johnson. First, I appreciate you being here. I've alerted him to the fact that most of my comments this -- questions this afternoon are going to relate to the Coast Guard budget recognizing that we're not going to be having a separate hearing on the Coast Guard's budget as part of Homeland Security.

I thank you for this opportunity to bring up this questions with the secretary and look forward to working with you and the ranking member on this important issues to my state and the country. Thank you.

HOEVEN:

Thank you, Senator Mikulski. Senator Baldwin.

BALDWIN:

I appreciate your holding this hearing. I'm going to be submitting some questions for the record due to my schedule after your presentation, Secretary Johnson.

But as a member of both the authorizing committee and this committee, it is especially helpful for us to be able to spend this time with you and I appreciate it.

HOEVEN:

Thank you. Senator Cassidy.

CASSIDY:

In the interest of time I will restrict myself to my question period. I'm good.

HOEVEN:

Very good. Thank you. Secretary Johnson, your opening statement.

JOHNSON:

Thank you. Chairman, Senators, I'm pleased to be here. The President's Fiscal 2017 budget request for the Department of Homeland Security reflects hard choices to fit within the caps established by the bipartisan budget agreement of 2015, but at the end of the day, it funds all of our vital homeland security missions in these challenging times.

The President's budget request calls for \$40.6 billion in appropriated funds compared, as you noted, Senator, to \$41 billion currently in FY2016, but an increase in total spending authority to \$66.8 billion compared to \$64.8 billion in the current fiscal year.

To be clear as has already been noted, part of that top line \$66.8 billion we're requesting be funded by fee increases and we have submitted authorization language to the Congress to authorize those fee increases.

Total workforce request is 229,626 compared to 226,157 in the current fiscal year accompanied by an overall workforce pay raise of 1.6 percent. Like this year, the President's budget requests \$6.7 billion to finance the cost of major disasters in FEMA's disaster relief fund, and the ability to collect 19.5 billion in fees compared to \$17.1 billion this year.

Of note, our budget request includes, \$5.1 billion for transportation screening operations, 1.6 billion, an increase of over 200, to fund our vital cybersecurity missions, 1.9 billion for the Secret Service, which is at the same level enacted in 2016, \$319 million to cover cost associated with unaccompanied children and families who cross our border illegally, 1.1 billion for recapitalization of the Coast Guard including a sizeable investment in this nation's future arctic capability, and 226 million for continued investment in the construction of a future DHS headquarters at St. Elizabeth's.

Like last year, reforming the way in which the Department of Homeland Security functions and conducts business, to more effectively and efficiently deliver our services to the American people is my top objective for 2016. We've done a lot in the last two years, but there is still much we will do and we can do. There are still too many stove pipes and inefficiencies in the department.

The centerpiece of our management reform effort has been the Unity of Effort initiative I announced and launched in April 2014, which focuses on getting away from the stove pipes, in favor of more centralized programming, budgeting and acquisition processes.

Overall, my goal as secretary continues to be the protection of the homeland and leaving the Department of Homeland Security a better place than I found it. Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

HOEVEN:

Thank you, Mr. Secretary, and we'll start with five- minute rounds for the questions. Let's go right to the fee issue first, I don't think that that's likely to happen, that the increase, that creates about \$909 million that we're going to have to find in other areas. And I guess I'll just start with your ideas in terms of prioritization as to how we should approach that.

JOHNSON:

Well, first of all, I do believe that a fee increase is totally appropriate in connection with aviation security, to increase the fee to air passengers and to air carriers I think is appropriate and I think it's worthwhile when you're talking about aviation security in particular.

I understand the reality of the difficulty of doing that. I note that in connection with the Murray Ryan budget deal in 2013, the air carrier fee was -- I'm sorry, the air passenger fee was increased from I think \$5 to \$5.60, so it's not impossible.

And a lot of us believe that when it comes to aviation security, an increase in the fees around air travel is appropriate. In terms of my priorities, they're reflected in the budget request and they're reflected in my prepared statement.

I do constantly think about adequate funding for aviation security, cyber security, the recapitalization of our Coast Guard, adequate funding for all the things we need to do for the Secret Service and adequate funding for our border security and immigration enforcement activities.

In any budget discussion, you always have to be mindful about the longer-term investments too. We are working right now in a DHS headquarters that is frankly wholly inadequate for our mission.

It was supposed to be temporary 12 years ago and it's still there, and we still work there and there are huge, huge drawbacks to the ability of my leadership to conduct our oversight of a 225,000 person workforce in our current headquarters.

We've made an investment in St. Elizabeth's and the more we put into it now, the less expensive it will be and the less time it will take to eventually get there.

I was pleased that in this year's budget the Congress funded enough to finish completion of the main building. and if we stay on track and we stay at the schedule reflected in this budget we'll actually get there sooner rather than later, and it's going to cost less and not more.

But the immediate priorities are as I have stated as part of this answer, sir, but there are other long term investments I really do believe we need to make in terms of the headquarters and the other things we need to do.

HOEVEN:

Senator Carper (ph) and others convinced and you convinced me that we should stay on track to move to the new facility. I had, you know, I had some feeling that maybe we should use some of those funds in these other areas, but I understand that you feel that that will generate both better results and cost savings over time.

Talking to the authorizers, that was -- other opinions while certainly, Senator Carper (ph) is influential in that discussion. And so, we are trying to help with that transition for you and we understand it.

But we are going to be pressed in some areas on this budget and so we really are going to have to work with you in some -- to the extent you want to with some prioritizations.

And another area where I see real pressure coming and, you know, we're going to have to do some reprioritization as in your detention beds because you're already running at a level where the funding in this budget would be below your current census.

And I anticipate that that -- that your population will actually increase, not go down, if you can convince me that that somehow it will because you're able to remove more of those individuals and that might be a cost savings. But in looking at your detention beds and family operations, you're not funding it at a level that your current census would require.

JOHNSON:

We've requested about 31,000 detention beds. I think it's important that we be able to transfer that funding from single adult to families as the need arises back and forth. At the time we made the request, we were dealing with an average detention capacity in fiscal '15 of about 28,000. I would say today, as I sit here, we're at about 31,000.

HOEVEN:

Well, your average census right now is about 33, so at 31 then it's down a little versus your current average.

JOHNSON:

So far I believe in fiscal 16 so far we're at about 33 overall. As I sit here right now we're about 31 today. That's the photograph today, the snapshot today.

But I think that it's critical that we have some flexibility in terms of moving back and forth between families and single adults. But I do think that the number we have submitted reflects hard choices and it also frankly, it reflects what we think we need and we ran at about 31,000 last year.

HOEVEN:

Well, and then, just kind of finishing this area or the other area is that the state and local FEMA preparedness grants, that's about \$560 million.

So somehow we're going to have to through flexibility through summary prioritization with the fee area with what you're going to need in detention beds and the FEMA grants, to me that looks like the toughest part of making this budget come together and we welcome your input because we're clearly, can be working on that in terms of some reprioritization and trying to find some solutions.

And, so we'll work with you and again, any input you have that can help, we want to...

JOHNSON:

Senator, without a doubt this budget request reflects hard choices given the caps, and the way the two-year deal was structured, 16 was a little better than 17, we're now having to deal with 17.

HOEVEN:

Right.

JOHNSON:

This is would be a tougher budget.

HOEVEN:

I am a strong believer in the usefulness and effectiveness of our grant money. I've seen it first-hand in active shooter training, in the ability to fund communications and surveillance, the ability to fund overtime for police and firefighters. But again, this reflects hard choices. I am not as happy as I could be with how we can fund our homeland security activities, but we've got to live within that ceiling.

HOEVEN:

Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I would like to pick up on that issue, Mr. Secretary about the preparedness grants, because as we're all well aware it's -- those first responders who are on the

frontlines whether it's firefighters or local law enforcement or emergency management officials who are usually dealing with disasters, with potential security threats first.

And this budget as I read it cuts those state grants by about 57 percent, urban grants by 45 percent, transit grants by 15 percent, port grants by 7 percent. So I wonder if you can talk about how you came up with those figures, what rationale was used, and what do we think the impact is going to be on the local level from -- if we do in fact make the cuts that are proposed in this budget.

JOHNSON:

I'll say a couple of things, Senator, one, up until very recently, the states and cities were limited to two years in terms of their ability to spend the money. They'd have two years to spend it. And I think you and I may even have this conversation at one point.

SHAHEEN:

Yes, we've had this issue.

JOHNSON:

I changed that policy to three years to make it a little more flexible so that states had more time and cities had more time to spend the time in year one, in year three.

So that went into the thinking with respect to this grant proposal. The other thing again is this budget reflects hard choices to live within the caps that the Congress and the president have agreed to.

Having said that, I do believe that Homeland Security grant making is very, very important, and given how the global terrorist threat has evolved to include the threat of lone wolf actors, small scale attacks that involve mass shootings by one or two actors who were not previously on the radar, who are very often home born or home grown, local law enforcement has taken on much of our counter- terrorism mission.

I said at a graduation ceremony for 1,200 New York City police officers in December, the cop on the beat may be the first one to detect the next terrorist attack on the United States.

And a lot of our grant making is put to good use in a lot of police departments around the country. So, at the end of the day, the appropriators will determine how best to come up with a budget within our caps. Grant making is important.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you and you mentioned the potential of terrorist threats, the lone wolves. On the things that I think is important in the budget proposal is the money that's appropriated for countering violent extremism as I mentioned in my opening statement. And I had the chance to question the secretary

of state yesterday about the efforts that State is doing on the same measure to counter violent extremism.

And I raised the program that started within DHS and he - and how you were all coordinating those efforts, so I would ask you about how you envision the funds for CBE to be used and also if you could talk a little bit about how you see the coordination function working with State and DHS.

JOHNSON:

I think it's better than it was. We know have an inter-agency taskforce that includes State, includes DOJ. DHS is the lead in that taskforce. And I'm sure there are other agencies involved.

Senator, as you probably know, this is a personal mission of mine. I have spent a lot of time in Muslim communities in particular around the country on our CBE efforts, I think that domestically it's critical that we build bridges to a lot of communities including Muslim communities.

And I think we are doing that. I also think it is critically important that we provide resources at the local level to help communities to deal with the problem of individuals who may be turning towards violence. I heard that over and over again when I would do these visits.

And so, I was very pleased that Congress this year provided 50 million for that purpose. I think that's a great thing. We were asking for 49 million for next year. And I'm really pleased also that our CBE efforts are getting bipartisan support from Republicans and Democrats who appreciate the importance of this effort.

There are a lot that the tech sector can do, which we've talked to them about to help amplify the counter message, to counter the message of the Islamic state. That is not a government mission. That's a private sector, tech sector mission.

I see more and more of the tech sector getting involved in that and so we want to help them partner with Muslim leaders and talking to philanthropies as well. But I do think that the grant money for CBE, which we began this year and we want to continue is -- has been and will be used very effectively.

And the CBE effort, given how the global terrorist threat has evolved, is in my view is important as any other Homeland Security effort.

SHAHEEN:

If I could just do a follow up Mr. Chairman, even though my time is up because I think it's relevant to this issue. The funding that was awarded in 2016, my understanding is that it's not actually going to be out in communities and be dispersed until the end of the year at the earliest, so can you talk about why the additional funding is needed even though that money is still in the pipeline and it hasn't been used yet?

JOHNSON:

Well, I suspect the answer is that because this is new money, it takes an effort to start up the process for the grant awards, grant applications and so forth, and that's why you're probably hearing that we won't be able to distribute it until the end of the fiscal year.

But I want to keep that pipeline going. I think this should not be a one year only deal. I think we need to keep at this, which is why we're asking for more money in '17.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HOEVEN:

Senator Cochran?

COCHRAN:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

There are several areas Mr. Secretary where you've outlined previously some goals and ambitions for the department. To what extent do you think this budget authority that you will be given by the Congress is sufficient? Is the administration's request sufficient in itself? Or do you have additions to make to those requests that have already have been submitted?

JOHNSON:

I think that we have done the best we can do within the budget caps that we have to adequately fund our vital Homeland Security missions, which include aviation security, maritime security, cyber security, the Secret Service and our other missions.

There are some hard choices reflected in this budget, including decreases in current funding levels. I am pleased that the Congress is supporting the continuation of our efforts to recapitalize the Coast Guard. I'm pleased that Congress this year is supporting our aviation security efforts.

I want to more sharply focus on aviation security and double down on aviation security in particular. That's reflected in our budget request. And cyber security, of course, is a big issue and so we're asking for increased levels of funding there. But overall this request reflects the hard choices of living within the caps that we were given.

COCHRAN:

What about traditional, I guess you would call it homeland enforcement officials that are hired under the authorities of the creation of the Homeland Security Act. To what extent do we need to

take a fresh look at the Secret Service, for example, are they being overworked? Do they have -- are they stressed out?

Do you have enough money to keep them adequately funded, so their jobs that are very dangerous and very important to the security interest of our country are satisfied?

JOHNSON:

Chairman, as you know, over the last several years, the Secret Service has had its challenges. And in December of 2014, an independent panel of outsiders did take a fresh look at the Secret Service. They were asked some hard questions about training, about manpower, about culture, about management.

They delivered some good recommendations all of which or almost all of which were following and I've told the director of the Secret Service to implement. I would say the biggest, say the biggest challenge is the one that you mentioned, which is manpower and the opportunity to train.

And so, Congress has supported that effort with adequate levels of funding and it's our job to make sure that hiring outpaces retirements and attrition and that's sometimes Director Clancy has been very focused on.

We do need to be sure that the Secret Service is adequately funded. We're in a presidential election year right now where four candidates are supported by the Secret Service. And at the end of the year, we're going to have another former president to take care of.

So staffing manpower is very important and whenever I get together with Director Clancy, that's topic of conversation, number one. And I'm pleased that in this request and in this fiscal year's budget, the Secret Service has -- the Congress has come through and supported the Secret Service and its efforts.

And it's our job to make sure that we invest and spend up to those levels and that's what I want to be sure Director Clancy is doing.

COCHRAN:

(inaudible). Thank you. We appreciate your service and all of those who work at the department. There's no more important activity in my view that we face at the federal level, budgeting, trying to appropriate the dollars where there is need (ph) the most to accomplish a very important responsibilities, activities on your service.

JOHNSON:

Thank you.

COCHRAN:

Thank you.

HOEVEN:

Thank you, Chairman.

Senator Mikulski?

MIKULSKI:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Secretary. Thank you and welcome. As I mentioned, I would like to speak about where we are with the Coast Guard budget and more specifically to that point, icebreakers and the Arctic.

I think we recognized that as an Arctic nation, we have certain responsibilities, obligations and icebreakers are right up there and when you have about one and a half, and one is in the Antarctic almost full time, it really is an imperative.

And I'm very pleased that the administration has acknowledged that in this year's budget. We've been working with you on this for a while and so making sure that we have that support for not only moving towards an icebreaker but acceleration of bringing that icebreaker online as the president has outlined, I think is critically important.

You also know that I have been a staunch defender of the Coast Guard at all levels and in making sure that they have the assets that they need to do the job. And so, I want assurances from you, Mr. Secretary, that we do have adequate funding in this year's budget to ensure the president's deadline of awarding construction of this new icebreaker by 2020 while at the same time we're on track with keeping the national security cutter, the offshore patrol cutters and the fast response cutters acquisition programs on time and on budget, because what I would hate to see is that we're sacrificing one at the expense of the other.

We need both and the recapitalization effort that you've spoken to is critically important for our country, so if you can speak to that.

JOHNSON:

The answer is yes.

MIKULSKI:

Good.

JOHNSON:

Both with respect to the current year and the request for the next year. I am very pleased that in our request there is \$150 million for the design of the new icebreaker, as you know, because of the

increasing commercialization in the Arctic and for national security reasons we need a second heavy icebreaker beyond the Polar Star. We have the Polar C, which is not operational.

And so we need a second heavy icebreaker in addition to the lighter ones we already have. Alongside of that, we are still continuing with the recapitalization of the FRCs, building more FRCs. In this budget request, there is a request for four. We're moving forward with the offshore patrol cutter.

I expect that we will make a selection for the contractor sometime this year. For the OPC, there is I believe 100 million to continue with that program. And as you know, this year we are tasked and given funding to build a ninth national security cutter.

So all of three of those programs continue and are moving forward. I think that is a good thing. And we have the money for the ice breaker. Some people are concerned that we might be moving too fast, but our goal...

MIKULSKI:

They haven't talked to me.

JOHNSON:

They haven't talked to you. That was what I -- was met with at this morning's House Appropriations meeting.

MIKULSKI:

Yes.

JOHNSON:

And we believe that we can stay on track and we should stay on track with respect to the 150 million this year, so that we can begin production by 2020.

MIKULSKI:

Well, I appreciate that response and know that you've got an ally in me in terms of how we can ensure people understand the imperative of building this out and doing it quickly.

We recognize that it is expensive, but we also recognize that it's the Coast Guard's study that it be not just one icebreaker, but there actually be three polar icebreakers and three smaller icebreakers, so making sure we have a trajectory going forward on that is going to be an issue for us as well.

I want to switch now to national security cutter and the program. You mentioned the approval to build out the ninth NSC which for us, from an Arctic perspective is absolutely key. We have seen national security cutters every season in the summer up in the Arctic as we're seeing different

traffic, different folks poking around up there that you probably wouldn't anticipate and knowing that we have the capabilities of these NSCs up there is very critical.

The question for you this afternoon is home porting of this ninth national security cutter or even another NSC that's currently slated for elsewhere. I think we need to be looking to a home port that is closer to the Arctic.

Right now the closest is Alameda, California. It's a long haul from Alameda, California to get up into the Arctic, into the Beaufort, into the Chukchi, into the areas in the Gulf and the Bering Sea. So recognizing what is happening in the Arctic and Coast Guard's need for expanded presence, can you comment on the prospects for a national security cutter to be stationed in Alaska?

JOHNSON:

As you know, I'm sure, Senator, we have a process within the Coast Guard that the commandant runs for determining home ports. And we're a ways off from the completion of the ninth cutter, so it would probably be premature for me at this stage to comment on whether or not it should be ported in the Arctic region, but I certainly understand the concern and I certainly understand that Alameda is a long way from the Arctic region.

MIKULSKI:

But you too recognize that Coast Guard's role, their mission truly has expanded dramatically as we are seeing greater activity within the Arctic region. As the commandant has said, it's like discovering a new ocean and the Coast Guard is charged with responsibility over that new ocean.

JOHNSON:

Yes.

MIKULSKI:

So how we make sure that we can -- we can stage these critical assets in places where they can be most effective, most impactful is important. So I would -- I understand that there is a process, but I would also encourage you within the department to look critically at the benefits of home porting closer to where that activity is going to be.

With that, Mr. Chairman, thank you for the extra time.

HOEVEN:

Thank you, Senator.

Senator Cassidy?

CASSIDY:

Secretary, a couple of things, first just a purely parochial issue. I have some folks I met with yesterday, they're trying to set up a meeting with the folks at the FEMA headquarter regarding base flood elevations, flood maps, et cetera.

Can my staff touch base with your staff to help arrange that meeting? They've been a little frustrated in doing so, so I'm just trying to be an intermediary for my...

JOHNSON:

Yes, Sir.

CASSIDY:

Thank you. I appreciate that. Secondly, to the point, your budget zeros out the cyber security education program and every year our committee puts it back in. And it seems like we have the better argument because in your testimony and elsewhere, you mention the need to have better cyber security which therefore, of course, suggests that we need a better trained workforce.

And I happen to know that there's one in Shreveport that is actually making an attempt to diversify the children who are the kids -- old enough but a 20-year-old is a kid, is -- are involved in such programs. So just trying to get a sense of why you all -- don't have the same prioritization for cyber education as we.

JOHNSON:

Senator, I do agree that cyber education is important. That is reflected in the national action plan for cyber security that the president announced two weeks ago. I would certainly prefer that we have more money for cyber education, but again, we have to live within the budget caps that have been agreed to between the Congress and the president, but I'm agreeing with you in principle.

I've been to some great cyber education institutions, including in your state, so I agree in principle of what you're saying. This -- unfortunately, this budget request reflects the hard choices we've got to live with, Sir.

CASSIDY:

The -- you mentioned TSA and airport security, obviously, I occasionally fly to New Orleans, big tourist city. There can be long lines in the non-TSA PreCheck. I'm imagining that we are expecting longer lines, so I guess kind of a series of questions along this.

To what degree can you all expand the use of the pre-check or trusted traveler program? Number one. Number two, I signed up my daughter. She flies with me commonly. And I put her in trusted traveller and she actually ends up not getting in that for whatever reason, it's not on her ticket. The airline, when I complained assures me that it's...

JOHNSON:

Trusted traveller or TSA PreCheck?

CASSIDY:

She's in trusted traveller. Did I have a fundamental misunderstanding as to whether or not that we'd get her in the pre-check line?

JOHNSON:

I think it's probably better to sign up for TSA PreCheck per se. I think that --I'm not real sure. But I can get back to you on that.

CASSIDY:

Please, please.

JOHNSON:

OK.

CASSIDY:

So just on a personal level, I know that it's a great program but not many people do it because when I go through New Orleans, I'm in the line, but there's a 100 people who are not. Is there way that we can expand that? And I have one other question after that, just to kind of get your thoughts there.

JOHNSON:

Well, first of all, we are expanding it in the sense that last year 1.5 million new people signed up for TSA PreCheck compared to 579,000 the year before, so the more people signed up for TSA PreCheck, the more they have the occasion to get on that line.

To be quite honest with you, the administrator of TSA and I are making a renewed effort at aviation security. That has meant longer wait times at airports for those in the longer lines due to our renewed push on security and because of the travel volume. There are more people travelling right now and less managed inclusion. What that means is we're no longer pulling people at airports out of the longer line and putting them in the shorter line, that is the TSA PreCheck line.

We're doing less of that now because we want to put more people through the more focused aviation security efforts. The IG's report that was unfortunately leaked last summer was a bit of a wake-up call for TSA, and I made sure it was a wake-up call for TSA. And so the new administrator with my support is very focused on aviation security.

CASSIDY:

And then let me go to my last question which is I'll be in line at DCA or New Orleans and mainly DCA, and they have somebody comes out with a little pad and randomly wipes the hand of somebody.

And there's a 100 people waiting and randomly wipes the hand, there is no way that this is risk-based screening. It is entirely random. Now, I have to know once I put a question to TSA, didn't get an answer, I'd like to know how many of those kind of random screenings actually results in someone with an intent to bring an explosive on board getting caught.

I'm guessing it's about zero. And another time I was at DCA, of about to board the plane beyond the security checkpoint, someone came up, pulled someone to the side, totally random best I could tell. She looked more like a grandmother than she looked like anything else and kind of goes through her stuff.

And I'm thinking if we're having a hard time with the number of employees who want to expand the workforce it seems better to focus it on a more of a risk-based program as opposed to let's expand this kind of random sort of we have 200 people waiting, let's grab three of them, now we're going to grab four because we've expanded it.

I'd like to know whether or not you've ever caught anybody with that. And secondly, why don't we become more risk-based as opposed to winning the lottery if you will by occasionally getting the one person?

JOHNSON:

Well, definitely, part of aviation security is random screening, randomization. That is inherent in aviation security, but there are also aspects of aviation security that do focus on individuals based on behavioral observation and based on things about the nature of where they're going, where they've been, whether they fit a certain profile or not, but very definitely part of it is random.

CASSIDY:

Now, I would love to see a frequency distribution of the degree to which the random checks have actually nabbed somebody who would not otherwise have been nabbed. For me it seems almost kind of a, again, here's a lady who's 80 years old, say 65 years old is the last woman I saw, just kind of they're looking a tourist. "Oh, excuse me, Ma'am; we're going to wipe your hands." And...

JOHNSON:

Well, first of all, I'd be happy to have our TSA leadership come by to talk to you more in detail about this.

CASSIDY:

That'd be great. I would like that.

JOHNSON:

Random screening serves two purposes. One, you may catch somebody doing something and also it serves as a deterrent. But I will be happy to send our TSA leadership by to meet with you for a greater in-depth conversation about this.

CASSIDY:

Thank you. I yield back.

HOEVEN:

The randomization, really, it's a deterrent isn't it? The reason you do it is as a deterrent. Once in a while you get somebody but primarily I think it's a deterrent is my understanding. One thing, I think Senator Cassidy brought the last time and I do see more of its use of K9s, which I think is very effective.

JOHNSON:

Yes.

HOEVEN:

What is the status in terms of using K9s?

JOHNSON:

We are using more K9s both with respect to passenger screening with respect to cargo screening at and around the airplanes before they take off, that is something that we have begun in -- that we've stepped up in recent months. In some respects there's no better technology than a K9.

HOEVEN:

Which strikes me as a very effective deterrent because the, you know, the dogs can walk around, pass people that are in line, that are coming in line that are, you know, even just moving around the airport.

It seems to me that it is -- you know, people notice it, the dogs' capabilities are remarkable and I think it's a very effective deterrent would certainly encourage further use, anything we can to help support that.

JOHNSON:

Thank you.

HOEVEN:

I'd like to ask you about filling your personnel vacancies, you know, in a number of areas, customs and border protection, Secret Service, cyber -- a number of these areas, you not only have only some attrition issues, but you're just not able to hire enough people to fill, you know, the number of slots that you -- that you have requested and that you feel you need.

So what do you -- what steps are you taking? How is that coming in terms of fulfilling some of these areas?

JOHNSON:

Well, let me begin with cyber. As you know there is a lot of competition for good cyber talent. I'm competing with other agencies and I'm competing with the private sector. I appreciate that in cyber legislation passed in 2014, Congress gave us greater ability to hire cyber talent.

And so, I've charged MPPD with ensuring that we do that. And I keep after them to make sure that we're doing that.

HOEVEN:

Are they telling you they have a reasonable pay benefits package that they can attract the talent they need? Do they feel that that's an issue or do they feel they have a package that works?

JOHNSON:

Kind of all the above. I mean, it is tough to hire good cyber talent without a doubt. But we have additional hiring authorities and we are hiring at a pretty rapid rate, but there are vacancies that we can fill now that we have additional vacancies to fill. So, it's an effort where we continually push our people to work at this.

With regard to the border patrol and some of our other law enforcement components, we have had a problem with getting people vetted fast enough, passing the polygraphs and so forth so, there has been an issue with hiring up to our authorities when it comes to the border patrol force.

I think we are now at 21,070 which is about where the CBP leadership believes that it needs to be, but that was with a lot of effort to get there.

HOEVEN:

So...

JOHNSON:

And then Secret Service, I've talked about earlier.

HOEVEN:

Yes. But there is an attrition issue I think as much as anything. And the other thing is length of hiring. I think you got about a 500-day average in terms of filling some of these backlog areas.

So, do you feel the changes you've been able to make will address it satisfactorily? You have the flexibility you need. You have what you need to try to make the changes you want to make.

JOHNSON:

The honest answer to your question, Senator, is that with the help of Congress we have been able to make some changes to -- that are positive in this area, but it's a work in progress and it's a challenge and I keep after my component leadership to make sure that we do as much as we can there.

HOEVEN:

Border Patrol, do you have what you need in border patrol in people and technology. What else would be helpful in terms of people and technologies as far as border patrol?

JOHNSON:

In terms of border patrol agents, we are -- in the view of our border patrol leadership -- at about where we need to be -- 21,070. In terms of technology, we could always use more investments in surveillance technology. I think that's reflected in our budget request, Mobile surveillance in particular.

HOEVEN:

And in the budget, do you feel you have adequate funding for your surveillance technology? I've been down there. I've seen it. I think it's effective. I agree with you there should be more. What's your feeling about the budget?

JOHNSON:

In terms of the ceiling we have to work with, my answer is yes.

HOEVEN:

Do you have enough flexibility between budget lines as far as personnel such that if you are hiring personnel faster in one area and you're not able to get them in another area, do you have enough ability to move funds or is that an issue for you?

JOHNSON:

Probably -- I want to say probably not.

(UNKNOWN)

You got it right.

JOHNSON:

My CFO says I have it right. Probably not.

HOEVEN:

Yes. OK. That's my sense, too. Well, Secret Service I guess we've covered pretty well. What about the White House fence? Remember we had started down a trail of replacing the White House fence and now I don't see that you have that request here to finish out replacing the White House fence.

JOHNSON:

Yes. We put in the temporary fence a couple of months ago which I believe has deterred fence jumping. There was one incident that occurred after that that I know about. And longer term, we need to make the investment in a higher, better fence. But the fence we put in last year, I think has served as a deterrent for the short term.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you. In my opening statement, I talked about the challenges we're facing in New Hampshire and so many other states with respect to the heroine and opioid epidemic. We're losing a person a day in New Hampshire from overdose deaths and about three times as many people as traffic accidents in New Hampshire.

And last spring, Senator Hoeven and I had the opportunity to go down to our southern border and meet with customs and border patrol in Laredo and watched some of the dogs in action as they were trying to find drugs being smuggled across the border.

And I remember very vividly that conversation with CBP where they talked about drugs coming across the southern border and going up the interstates, up 95 which is how they get to New Hampshire and then up 35 across the middle of the country.

And obviously, we've got to confront this crisis on many fronts. But one piece of it is the interdiction of drugs and the challenges that CBP and Coast Guard are facing as they look at how to keep those drugs from coming across the border.

So, can you talk first about whether there are other things -- you just mentioned that you think we're about right in terms of CBP guards -- can you talk about what additional role they might be able to play in interdiction and whether the budget is there to support that role?

JOHNSON:

Well, I also believe there's a role for Homeland Security Investigations.

SHAHEEN:

Absolutely. I should have mentioned that.

JOHNSON:

And HSI is part of an interagency task force with DOJ, components of DOJ to deal with the heroine epidemic in New Hampshire and elsewhere. We have had considerable success at the border with interdiction but there's the interior effort as well.

We have stepped up our interior enforcement efforts with HSI and as you know, the Coast Guard does a terrific job at sea. One of our national security cutters you may know, the Stratton, went out on a four-month mission off the coast of Central and South America and in just four months itself seized over \$1 billion in illicit narcotics including two cartel submarines.

I didn't know cartels had submarines until last year. But the heroin epidemic is very real. And it has become an interagency coordinated task force mission.

SHAHEEN:

And so, when you say it's become an interagency mission, can you talk a little bit about what that means? How are you working with, across the agencies within Homeland Security and with other parts of government and justice that are working on this issue?

JOHNSON:

I know HSI has been involved in this effort with DEA, FBI and that has been a relatively recent phenomenon. And I'm happy to get you more details. In our briefing we can have our law enforcement come in.

SHAHEEN:

That would be great. I would very much appreciate that.

JOHNSON:

Sure.

SHAHEEN:

On another issue that I've been working on for a very long time, I think you and Secretary Kerry, you're probably aware that you and Secretary Kerry received a letter from Senators McCain and

Reed, Chair and Ranking member of the Armed Services Committee, about the special immigrant visa program and the recent interpretation of language in the Defense Authorization bill for this year that changed the interpretation of how those visas would be awarded.

And I would hope that you would consult with State on this issue. I had a chance to raise this concern with Secretary Kerry yesterday at the Foreign Relations Committee and he was very responsive to the idea that perhaps they needed to take another look at the interpretation because certainly I think for those of us who worked on that Defense Authorization bill are understanding of what that language meant was different than what state and DHS have interpreted.

So, can you tell me whether you're willing to take another look at that and whether you've been consulting with state in doing that.

JOHNSON:

I have read your letter. I thought it was a good letter, hats off to whoever wrote the letter. I thought it made some good points. It is a legal question which we're having our lawyers look at.

For myself, I do believe that an expression of congressional intent from Congress directly on a point is very relevant. So, we have the letter and we're looking at the question.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you. I appreciate that. And as we all know the attorneys can interpret the law in many different ways. And I agree with you, I think congressional intent is very important here. So, I appreciate that. Thank you.

HOEVEN:

Senator Cochran?

COCHRAN:

Mr. Chairman, my wide awake staff has decided I needed to ask one more question.

Mr. Secretary, as your department continues to analyze the potential applications and performance of using unmanned aerial systems in its operations, would you provide this subcommittee with an inventory of existing unmanned maritime systems and sensors that you are researching?

JOHNSON:

Yes, sir, I will.

COCHRAN:

Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HOEVEN:

Pretty good. How about that, just like that.

COCHRAN:

That's (inaudible).

HOEVEN:

Could you also provide us with that for not just maritime but on the border?

JOHNSON:

Yes.

HOEVEN:

U.S. as well.

JOHNSON:

Yes.

HOEVEN:

Thank you.

(UNKNOWN)

And you will share that with the committee (inaudible).

HOEVEN:

Yes, for the committee.

(UNKNOWN)

OK.

HOEVEN:

Unaccompanied alien children, 2015 we saw a reduction versus - I'm talking fiscal year now. So, you look at fiscal year '15, you saw a reduction versus fiscal year '14. But now, in fiscal '16 the numbers are coming back up. So, if you would talk about what you're doing to stem that flow?

JOHNSON:

Yes, Senator. This is a report that is issued daily for me with these numbers, these migrant numbers on the southwest border. I look at it - it's one of the first things I look at when I come to work in the morning along with my daily intelligence. And as you noted, in fiscal '15 we were down around 331,000 which was the second lowest apprehension number since 1972; '14 was 479; '15 was 331.

In the fall, the beginning of fiscal '16, we began to see the numbers rise again and they were reaching by December levels that looked like they were approaching the summer spike we had in 2014. So, January 4th I issued a statement laying out our comprehensive plan for dealing with it which included more focused interior enforcement against those, directed at those who are part of families who had been ordered removed by an immigration court. Their appeal time had run and they had no pending asylum claim.

I stated that publicly. I announced that publicly. The effort has not been limited to just the one weekend. It has continued. Since the beginning of the year, the numbers have gone down reflected on this chart right here. The blue line is up-to-date and the spike that you see there is the end of last year.

The numbers now in January and February are down around where they were this time last year. So, January and February of this year look a lot like January and February of last year. But we are concerned about that traditional seasonal increase that always occurs.

HOEVEN:

Right.

JOHNSON:

And so, I think a big part of this and a big part of border security is our enforcement priorities. And those apprehended at the border are priority one for enforcement along with the others in that category.

It's not real popular. Some people are very unhappy with that. But I think it's fundamental to our border security efforts. We have to mean what we say when we say we're going to send you back if you come here illegally.

So, this is something that in this that includes people who are part of families and that includes unaccompanied children consistent with our laws so that's where we are.

HOEVEN:

Do you - I don't suppose you have any February results. Yes, it does appear that the actions you took made a significant difference from December to January. And so, a continuation...

JOHNSON:

I don't know...

HOEVEN:

... of that activity would be important. I'm just wondering if you have any data that indicates in February (inaudible) continuing.

JOHNSON:

February has increased slightly from about - from January. On the last projection I saw for the month of February has a - had about 24,000 apprehensions for the month which is considerably lower than December. And it's about what January looked like.

So, I don't know whether the enforcement actions are cause and effect but the numbers are in fact lower for apprehensions by the border patrol.

HOEVEN:

Are you continuing to develop your metrics and then also to release those including some of the metrics on ICE? I know we provided additional funding in the '16 appropriation to ICE for some of these operational data reporting.

So, can you kindly just give us an update there in terms of reporting on data from ICE and the other entities?

JOHNSON:

Yes. Senator, as you and I have discussed, I think I need - I believe we need to have better, clearer metrics for measuring border security. When I came to this department in 2013, the border patrol has a method for measuring total attempts to cross the border illegally but I don't think it's very sophisticated.

And so, we've had an outside federally funded research firm that we are working with developing more sophisticated ways for measuring total attempts to cross the border, more sophisticated ways for measuring how we - how we are doing in terms of border security sector by sector. And this is a project that I want to complete before I leave office 11 months from now.

HOEVEN:

I guess I'm over my time. I'd better turn to Senator Shaheen.

SHAHEEN:

Thank you. I would - I only have one really additional area of questioning and that has to do with the disaster mitigation efforts. As I'm sure you're aware, last year, the administration requested significant additional funding for mitigation grants.

And so, I was surprised this year to see the dramatic reduction in the request for those programs. This is an area that I think really does pay big dividends, with the increased natural disasters that we're seeing, this is one way to reduce those costs and we can encourage state and local efforts in the mitigation area if they think at the federal level we're going to be real partners in doing this.

And so, as I said, I was surprised to see that those programs are reduced pretty significantly in this budget. And I wonder if you could talk to why - what the rationale is for that. I mean, I understand the hard choices piece but this is one that seems to me that pays big dividends at the other end in terms of cost savings.

And how do we develop a culture that is more focused on avoiding disasters and trying to mitigate for disasters as opposed to just waiting for things to happen and then responding?

JOHNSON:

Well, my CFO can correct me but I believe that what we've asked for is essentially the same as what we received for this year, is that correct? Excuse me, sorry. OK. All right. OK.

Yes, you're correct. This year, we prioritized flood mapping over the disaster - the pre-disaster assistance because it was something we thought we needed to do within the confines of what we've had to work with. That was how we saw the priorities that were necessary to this year in this constrained year, flood mapping which is something that members of Congress have talked to me a lot about.

SHAHEEN:

And certainly I agree that that's an area that we need to support. Are there other agencies within the federal government where you see the ability to partner in ways that encourage a continuation of mitigation efforts and trying to support prevention as opposed to waiting for disasters?

JOHNSON:

Yes. I would - I don't want to speculate but I think the short answer to your question is yes, I can imagine other agencies that should be supporting and contributing to this - to this effort.

SHAHEEN:

And so, are there efforts underway to explore those kinds of partnerships? I mean, DOT is one that comes to mind, obviously. But other areas that work on infrastructure projects or places where it

seems to me that we should be thinking about how we all work together to get the best bang for the buck?

JOHNSON:

If they're not, there probably should be so, that's my - that's my best answer.

SHAHEEN:

OK. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

HOEVEN:

Just a couple to finish up Mr. Secretary, again, you've been very patient with your time, we appreciate it.

Senator Cochran, did you have any -- biometric exit system, why is it taking as long to develop and implement and could we do it biographic then if biometric is the problem. But an exit tracking system obviously very important if -- to get a handle on visa overstays.

So, it could be biometric, it could be, you know, we've down there we've seen pretty good biographic, too. So, I mean, you could comment on both, I guess.

JOHNSON:

Senator, the visa overstay report that we've just issued is based on biographic exit. So, somebody is not counted as a visa exit unless we charted it by biographic exit. That was how the report was based.

HOEVEN:

And that's primarily for travelers, right? It doesn't -- but that doesn't go to students, guest workers and others.

JOHNSON:

The non-immigrant B-1, B-2 visas. At this point it will be very difficult to track visa or at this point it would be very difficult to track student visa overstays because the amount of the permitted stay is often difficult to know as opposed to a hard and fast date.

With regard to biometric exit, I've asked my staff the exact same question, why is it taking so long. This year we received money - ten year money -- from Congress in fee increases to pay for biometric exit. So, I've said to my folks OK, we have the money, now let's have the timetable.

And so, what I told me folks is that we want to begin implementing this as soon as 2018 at airports, biometric exit.

HOEVEN:

Do you have a realistic or what you think is realistic timeline to roll this out at this point or is that you're developing that. I mean, so should we be looking for 2018 it would be ubiquitous then in terms of...

JOHNSON:

I told my folks that we -- we have pilot programs right now, biometric exit.

HOEVEN:

Yes. Right.

JOHNSON:

I've told my folks I want to see this begin in the implementation at airports by 2018. So, if I believe that my folks take me seriously when I tell them to do things and I do, sometimes they have to ask two or three times, I believe that this deadline will be met.

HOEVEN:

Last question I have relates to cyber.

JOHNSON:

They've met all my deadlines when it comes to cyber security.

HOEVEN:

Well, and that's where I want to finish up is on the cyber piece and there are specific -- we've talked about a number of different things but where I really want to go is with the technology, with EINSTEIN, with some of these technology systems you have, do you think you have what you need, are you able to develop what you need?

I mean, this is such a dynamic fast-moving area. You know, technology advances every single day. And you're facing a new threat every single day. So, do you feel that you have -- and obviously there's a major commitment in funding in this budget, but talk for a minute about the technology including this issue of, you know, of getting into phones and so forth or getting help -- the help you need from the private sector whether it's getting into an encrypted phone or something else.

JOHNSON:

Let me focus first on the EINSTEIN system because we are making a huge investment in EINSTEIN -- EISNTEIN 1, 2 and 3. And there are always skeptics that say whether it's a cyber security system or a fighter jet, there's always -- there are always people who'd say I can build it bigger and better and you don't have the latest and best.

The conversations that I've had with our cyber security experts tell me that EINSTEIN remains a good investment because of its unique capability to rely upon classified information for detecting and blocking cyber intrusions and more importantly because it is a platform for future technology, EINSTEIN -- the EINSTEIN 3A system which we will have in place for the entire federal.gov civilian world by the end of this year can block known bad actors, known bad signatures.

It is also a platform for technology to block suspected bad actors in the future. And so, once that system is in place, it will serve as a platform for the future technology I think we need to have to block the suspected bad actor.

I believe that we should and we can stay the course with our current investments, but we need to build on that. And when the time is right, add to it, replace it, improve it, but have the ability to do so. And I think we can with the EINSTEIN system which is sort of the centerpiece of our federal cyber security efforts.

The cyber security bill that passed last year I think is a terrific bill. I'm very pleased with the bipartisan support we got from Congress on a very complex issue, which gives us additional authorities and gives the private sector the immunities that they say they need to share with us cyber threat indicators.

That was a really, really big thing that for a long time we heard from the private sector they had to have before they'd be sharing cyber threat indicators with us. We now have that in place. So, I think we're moving in the right direction and I think that by the time this administration leaves office and I leave office we will have made tangible improvements in cyber security.

HOEVEN:

Well, that leads right to this whole issue of getting assistance from the private sector, Apple, the encrypted phone and so forth, give us your take on how to -- how that should be approached and what can and can't be done.

JOHNSON:

I think we need to be in a different place from where we are now. I think in response to the demands of the marketplace a lot of tech companies have driven deeper and deeper toward encryption. That has in fact hampered federal, state and local law enforcement and their ability to track and detect potential terrorist plots, crime and we're not just talking about federal crime, any state crime that involves a communication.

I hear this from the district attorney of New York County, for example, Cyrus Vance, he is very big on the encryption issue. So, I think we need to move the pendulum in a different direction. It's

gone pretty far in one direction. I think we need to move it back a little bit to account for law enforcement and national security needs.

Exactly how we accomplish that with the tech sector is a -- is a harder, longer conversation to have. This latest issue in California, I fully support the government's position. I've read the briefs. I understand the need and I'm fully supportive of the government's position there.

I know from talking to the FBI director that in a number of instances federal law enforcement gets good cooperation from a lot of companies in that sector on a case-by-case basis. This is one whether we just didn't agree but I think there needs to be a larger national conversation to address this issue because I don't like where we are right now.

HOEVEN:

Is there anything else that you want to bring up that we haven't asked you in the course of this hearing regarding your budget?

JOHNSON:

I'm sure that this committee appreciates the fundamentally different place we are in right now in terms of the global terrorist threat. It's more complicated. It involves smaller scale attacks by terrorist-inspired actors here in the homeland.

People ask me what keeps you up at night. One of the things that keeps me up at night is that we could have another attack in a community like Chattanooga, Tennessee or San Bernardino at a moment's notice by somebody who was not previously on our radar. And I think this is why our CBE efforts are so important.

We're in a fundamentally different place now and just on my watch in national security since 2009, I've seen that evolution from taking the fight to AQAP and al-Shabab and COR AQ (ph) overseas, we're now dealing with a very different type of threat that includes people who live among us.

And that requires a whole of government effort and that requires where it counts, we build the right bridges. And that requires supporting local law enforcement in their efforts, too. So...

HOEVEN:

Again, thank you, Mr. Secretary for being here and to you and your people for all the hard work they do in this very important area.

This will conclude our hearing today. The hearing record will remain open for two weeks from today. Senators may submit written questions for the record and we ask that the department respond to them within a reasonable length of time.

With that, this subcommittee stands in recess.