

Hearing Transcript

Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Hearing on the ISIS Threat in America

May 26, 2016

JOHNSON:

This hearing will come to order. I want to welcome our witnesses. Thank you for taking the time to be here today and for submitting your thoughtful testimonies. We're looking for to the answers to our questions. When I took over chairman of this committee, working with Senator Carper, who by the way...

CARPER:

A bloodless coup. It was a bloodless coup.

JOHNSON:

But he's looking pretty good having just spent four days traveling with the president to Vietnam and just getting back yesterday. So I got a good night's sleep. Appreciate that. But one of the first things we do is we developed a mission statement for the committee. Pretty simple: to enhance the economic and national security of America.

And then, the Homeland Security side of the committee, we established four basic priorities: border security -- we've held I think, 18 hearings on some aspect of our unsecured border. Cyber security, we've passed the Federal Cyber Security Enhancement Act, a good measure to protecting our critical infrastructure. Particularly our logical grid from kinetic terrorist attack, cyber attack, EMP and GMD.

And then finally, what can we do as a nation to protect our homeland against Islamic terrorists and other violent extremists? So, this hearing is really about that last priority: addressing Islamic terror and trying to secure our homeland and keep it safe. Not an easy task.

Every last one of these hearings' goal is primarily to layout a reality as best we can so that we can identify, define the problem, admit we have it. So that we can actually work toward some common sense solutions, recognizing this in this realm the solutions are very difficult. And they're going to take quite some time to finally in the end, defeat Islamic terror.

I just want to lay out a couple facts that have been developed by staff. Recognize again, these are estimates. There's nothing hard and fast, but it just gives us some indication of what we're doing here when we're talking about ISIS. Apparently, the monthly revenues of ISIS have dropped from \$80 million per month, which would be a little less than \$1 billion per year, to about \$56 million per month. About \$672 million a year.

Still some pretty significant revenue in the hands of barbarians. There have been 12 cases of confirmed use of mustard agent. Though other cases are suspected both in Syria and Iraq. That ought to concern everybody. More than 442,900 foreign have entered the conflict zone, about 7,400 westerners. ISIS has trained at least 400 fighters to target Europe with its external operation.

At least eight of the Paris plotters were foreign fighters returning from Syria. The same network plotting the Paris attacks and Brussels attacks -- they were the same network that were behind the Paris and the Brussels suicide bombings. In total, there were 162 victims. 1.8 million illegal border crossings into the European Union in 2015, 1.8 million.

The previous year in 2014 there were 280,000. So you can just see that as things degrade in Syria and Iraq, that's putting enormous pressure on the European Union states. ISIS has 43 affiliates according to some reports and of supporting groups globally. So, the fact that ISIS has a territory, has established its caliphate, other Islamic terror groups are beginning to pledge their loyalty. So ISIS continues to metastasize.

Until we finally do defeat them, they're going to continue to inspire. They're going to continue to metastasize. They're going to continue to be a growing and real threat. So again, I think we have to take this seriously. We'll continue to explore this. I'm really looking forward to the testimony from representatives from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of State.

With that, I'll turn it over to Senator Carper after I ask consent to enter my written statement in the record.

CARPER:

I think that's a great idea.

Mr. Chairman, thanks for pulling this together. And I want to say to the undersecretary and to Justin, thank you very much for joining us today. It's an important hearing and a timely one as well. Our thoughts and the prayers continue to be with the people of Belgium, people of France, who not only endured losses from terror attacks in their capital city, but also the recent tragedy involving the crash of the EgyptAir flight that departed from Charles de Gaulle airport earlier this month.

While we're still learning the effects around the velocity (ph) of the EgyptAir flight, this tragedy reminds us that securing our homeland is likely to remain an ongoing challenge for some time to come.

CARPER:

And our efforts must adapt as groups like ISIS evolve their tactics. And the chairman has alluded to some of progress that's being made on the battlefield and in other ways with respect ISIS.

And it's a big coalition, 60 nations. It's beginning to work. And we're providing, I think, good leadership. But it's going slower than we'd like. But real progress is being. Not only in terms of regaining land, reducing their capacity to be successful in that part of the world. Taking away their money, the ability to finance their operations.

But securing our borders and immigration system is obviously a key element of keeping us safe. And we've focused quite a bit on those topics of late, as you know. Hearings on the Syrian refugee program, the security of the visa waiver program, the fairness of all these screening efforts, bear witness to -- to our focus.

We found that the Syrian refugee screening process takes upwards to two years; that DHS has enhanced the security of the visa waiver program not once, not twice but three times in the last 18 months. And this committee has focused a lot of time and energy on that as well. And our government also deploys special visa teams abroad to help consular officers detect fraud.

Securing our borders, however, is only half the battle. And we could shut down all travel and immigration to this country and still not be safe from terrorist threats. That's because, as Peter Bergen testified in November, I believe right here in this room, every person -- this is a quote from him -- "Every person who has been killed by a jihad terrorist in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident."

Let me say that again: "Every person who's been killed by a jihad terrorist in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident."

The people who've carried out these attacks weren't foreign students. They were not tourists. They were not even refugees. They were Americans. And even in many cases, they'd spent much of their lives in this country, in the United States. For instance, the Tsarnaev brothers spent nearly a decade in the United States before carrying out the Boston Marathon bombings. Major Nidal Hasan was born and raised in America and was serving in the U.S. Army when he committed the Fort Hood attack. Syed Farook spent most of his life in California before he and his wife committed the San Bernardino massacre.

Unfortunately, ISIS knows all too well the best way to attack America is to have Americans do it for you. That's why ISIS has put an emphasis on using social media and the Internet to radicalize Americans at home. In order to counter home-grown terrorist attacks, we have to do our best to make sure that when ISIS makes its recruitment pitch to Americans, their twisted message falls on deaf ears.

But if ISIS is successful in radicalizing Americans, we must also be -- we must also be vigilant in ensuring to the best of our ability that we can stop almost every terrorist attack well before an attack can be carried out.

Let me be clear. DHS, Department of Homeland Security and other agencies are not alone in tackling the threat of home-grown terrorism. Congress must help. Indeed, all Americans must help. And we can start by taking action to keep weapons, whether they're explosives, dirty bomb materials or guns, out of the hands of terrorists here.

We also need to improve the ability of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to detect home-grown terrorism plots by helping them work through their challenges on encryption. And finally, we need to give our federal agencies the tools they need to help prevent our young people from falling prey to ISIS's online propaganda.

Late last year, I authored with some of our colleagues here legislation to empower the Department of Homeland Security to tackle this challenge. This legislation would create an office at the Department of Homeland Security tasked with working with community groups, families, especially young people, and religious leaders to develop community-based solutions for stopping the recruitment of young Americans into ISIS.

CARPER:

Our legislation was reported out of committee earlier this year. It was also included in the Department of Homeland Security Accountability Act, which we approved just yesterday. We need to get this bill enacted into law as soon as possible so that we can further help our communities resist ISIS recruitment efforts.

So, Secretary Mayorkas and Mr. -- do you pronounce your name Siberell, right? Siberell. I want to commend you and your departments for the work that you do to protect our people in this country from terrorist attacks both at home and abroad. We stand ready to work with you both and your colleagues both to make sure that your departments have the resources that you need to combat these threats.

We welcome your testimony. We appreciate your hard work, the leadership that you're providing, your selfless devotion, really, to our country. God bless you, thank you.

JOHNSON:

Thank you Senator Carper. It is the tradition of this Committee to swear in witnesses so if you'll both rise and raise your right hand.

Do you swear the testimony you will give before this Committee will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth so help you God?

(OFF-MIKE)

Please be seated.

Our first witness is Mr. Alejandro -- we'll call you Allie -- Mayorkas. Mr. Mayorkas is the Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. Previously he served as the Director of the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services, or USCIS, and DHS. Lot of acronyms in this business.

He is a partner in the law firm and the youngest United States attorney to serve the nation when he was Senate-confirmed in 1998 as the U.S. Attorney for the Central District of California. In that capacity he also served as Vice-Chair of the Attorney Generals' Advisory Committee on Civil Rights as a member of the Subcommittee on Ethics in Government. Mr. Mayorkas.

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Carper and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss priorities and key actions of our Department of Homeland Security to address the terrorist threats to our nation, particularly following the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant November, 2015 and March, 2016 terrorist attacks in Brussels and Paris.

I will be brief in my remarks and defer to my written testimony submitted this past Tuesday so that I can focus on the questions you may pose. As I articulated in my earlier submission, the threats we face today are more complex and decentralized than they were a decade ago. We are in a new phase of the global terrorist threat. We have moved from a world of terrorist-directed attacks to a world that increasingly includes the threat of terrorist-inspired attacks, one in which the attacker may never have come face-to-face with a member of a terrorist organization but is instead inspired by the messages and propaganda of ISIL.

By their nature such inspired attacks are harder for intelligence and law enforcement to detect and could occur with little or no notice, presenting a more complex security challenge. Confronting the world of both terrorist-directed and terrorist-inspired attacks our Department of Homeland Security has focused our resources and efforts in four areas in order to counter the diverse and evolving threats we face. Aviation security, border security, countering violent extremism and information sharing and support.

In each of these areas we have strengthened and continue to strengthen our programs and processes and are executing critical initiatives to better respond to the dynamic threat landscape across the world. We have strengthened our screening protocols at domestic airports and established security enhancements at foreign airports that are last points of departure to the United States. We are continually refining our risk-based strategy and layered approach to border security, extending our zone of security to interdict threats as far outward from our homeland as possible. We are leveraging all available advance passenger and manifest data, intelligence, law enforcement information and open source information.

We have strengthened the visa waiver program in coordination with the Department of State and Congress. All individuals traveling as part of the visa waivers program are subject to rigorous screening before departure to the United States and throughout the travel continuum. The visa waiver program significantly enhances our nation's security and law enforcement partnerships with participating countries and we continue to work with our international partners to strengthen our information sharing, increasing our joint presence at Europol.

We have strengthened our information sharing efforts and the close partnership with state, local and tribal law enforcement, our key first responders throughout our nation. Finally, we have

strengthened our relationships with communities across the country and agencies across the government through our Office for Community Partnerships and the Countering Violent Extremism Taskforce. We are working in close collaboration to develop guidance, resources, best practices and training to protect communities from violent extremism.

I would like to thank this Committee for endorsing the Secretary's key community of effort priorities. Strengthening and maturing the Department is an ongoing process, and we rely on this Committee to work with us, legislating the Joint Task Forces and Undersecretary for Strategy, Policy and Plans, and the office that leads our countering violent extremism efforts is critical to ensuring the Department of Homeland Security is able to pursue key mission priorities. On behalf of our Department, I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman, and the Committee for your support of our Department. I am very proud to work alongside 240,000 men and women who work each day to protect our homeland.

Thank you very much.

JOHNSON:

Thank you Mr. Mayorkas. Our next witness is Mr. Justin Siberell. Mr. Siberell is the Acting Coordinator of Counterterrorism in the Bureau of Counterterrorism at the U.S. Department of State. He joined the State Department in foreign service in March of 1993, and joined the C.T. Bureau in July of 2012.

He is a career member of the Senior Foreign Service with the rank of Minister Counselor. Before joining the Counterterrorism Bureau, Mr. Siberell was principle officer in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In Washington he completed tours in State Department Operations Center and Executive Secretary. Mr. Siberell.

SIBERELL:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Johnson, Ranking Member Carper, members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. The Department of State is working closely with the Department of Homeland Security and other U.S. Government agencies to counter ISIL and keep America safe. Mr. Chairman we face an evolving terrorist threat environment that is increasingly dispersed and adaptive. This new reality requires that we strengthen partnerships globally, including with our European partners.

I would like to describe some of the steps we are taking to do just that. I have submitted a longer statement for the record.

In partnership with a broad coalition of countries across the globe we've made progress in degrading the capabilities of transnational terrorist groups. In particular the U.S.-led global coalition to counter ISIL has made important progress in reducing ISIL's control of territory in Iraq and Syria, as well as constricting the funds and foreign terrorist fighters available to it. At the same time terrorist groups continue to exploit instability along with weak or non-existent governments,

sectarian conflict and porous borders in key regions of the world to extend their reach, terrorized civilians and attract and mobilize new recruits.

In the face of increased military pressure, ISIL, Al Qaeda and those groups' branches and adherents have pursued mass casualty attacks against symbolic targets and public spaces. Terrorist attacks in Bomico (ph), Beirut, Brussels, Jakarta, Paris, San Bernardino and elsewhere demonstrate that these groups remain resilient and determined to continue targeting innocent civilians.

Mr. Chairman the Department of State is working to address and mitigate the threat posed by foreign terrorist fighters and other radicalized individuals around the world, particularly in Europe. We are working with partners to increase information sharing, augment border security, and strengthen legal regimes to enable more effective counterterrorism efforts. This engagement has yielded positive results.

Forty-five countries with whom we've engaged have passed new laws or updated existing laws to address the threat caused by foreign terrorist fighters. The United States now has in place agreements with 55 international partners to strengthen efforts to identify, track, and deter the travel of suspected terrorists. We have provided support to Interpol to enhance its role in serving as a focal point for sharing critical foreign terrorist fighter identity data with countries around the world. Fifty-eight countries and the United Nations now contribute foreign terrorist fighter profiles to Interpol.

Many of these actions were guided by the requirements on member states identified in U.N. Security Council Resolution 2178, a landmark document developed by the United States, agreed unanimously by Security Council members in September, 2014. We continue to work with DHS and our 38 visa waiver program partners to strengthen our vital security and counterterrorism partnership including by implementing changes contained in the Visa Waiver Program Improvement and Terrorist Act Prevention Act of 2015. The Visa Waiver Program gives us unprecedented leverage to hold our partners to the highest standards of security in issuing passports and screening travelers, and it is vital to the security of the homeland as well as the security of our closest allies.

We've increased our engagement with our European partners in the aftermath of the horrific terrorist attacks in Paris and Brussels. Earlier this year we deployed foreign fighter surge teams, composed of experts from across the U.S. Interagency Counterterrorism community to several European countries including Belgium and Greece. These interagency teams are working with partners to identify concrete areas to tighten cooperation, to identify, disrupt, arrest and prosecute suspected foreign terrorist fighters.

The Department of State is strengthening our international partners' border security through development and deployment of the Terrorist Interdiction Program, and working with the Department of Homeland Security to deploy key technologies to assist governments more effectively identify and target suspect travelers. These programs provide a highly valuable capability for countries to strengthen border controls through enhanced technology and training.

Effective border security is one of the most essential tools governments possess to deny terrorists the space and freedom to plot and carry out attacks. And our efforts in this regard are aimed at ensuring international partners adopt and implement effective procedures and technology to enhance our collective security. We are also increasing our focus on identifying and preventing the spread of violent extremism, to stop radicalization, recruitment and mobilization of individuals to engage in terrorist attacks.

Yesterday the Department of State and USAID released the first ever joint strategy on countering violent extremism that articulates an expanded effort to better understand and address the drivers of radicalization and disrupt the recruitment into terrorist groups.

Mr. Chairman there's no greater priority than keeping America safe from the threat of terrorism. The Department of State works in close partnership every day with our colleagues at DHS and other government agencies to counter the threat posed to the United States by terrorist groups like ISIL. We greatly appreciate Congress' interest in support of our efforts. I look forward to your questions and our discussion today. Thank you.

JOHNSON:

OK, Mr. Siberell. Mr. Mayorkas, obviously the headlines nowadays are about the long lines at TSA so I do want to talk a little bit about that. We did have a briefing by Admiral Neffenger in Congress Committee -- I just want your assessment of what is causing that. Is it the root cause of -- lines as long as three hours getting through, for example, Chicago O'Hare?

Mayorkas: If I can, Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the opportunity. Let me separate Chicago O'Hare and the three-hour lines that were experienced about a week ago, because quite frankly that was error on our part that was a failure to address with appropriate staffing a very predictable surge at a peak time of travel. So that was an aberration, if you will, with respect to the agency's failure to address what it was ready for.

JOHNSON:

We can separate O'Hare, but there are problems at other airports, so let's talk about the problem in its totality.

MAYORKAS:

We would identify three general factors, if I may, and they have arisen over the course of quite some time. Number one and very importantly, we have enhanced security measures at our airports in response to an Inspector General's report that was published last year. That Inspector General's report identified certain deficiencies in the Agency's protocols and we have since executed a ten-point plan directed by the Secretary to address those deficiencies.

JOHNSON:

Let me stop you right there. Do you have a metric in terms of what those enhanced security measures are meaning in terms of through-put? Do we have an average number of passengers through-put versus what it was versus what it is today?

MAYORKAS:

I would have to report back to you on that, Mr. Chairman. I don't have that at my ...

JOHNSON:

I would ask that that be submitted afterwards.

MAYORKAS:

Most certainly. Secondly, over a number of years, the staffing at TSA dropped considerably, and it dropped at a time, and this is the third factor, that there was an increase in travel volume. So I would say those three factors together -- enhanced security, which we will of course not compromise, an increase in travel volume, and a reduction in the staffing of our personnel. And we are addressing all three of those very vigorously.

JOHNSON:

So talk about the staffing, because we've also had representatives from Customs Border Protection -- they're having a hard time also staffing. I'll tell you, manufacturing in Wisconsin, there's not one manufacturer can hire enough people. So just talk about -- is the staffing, is it a budget related issue? Is it the fact that we're simply not able to attract and recruit enough people? Is it attrition problem, are people leaving for certain reasons?

MAYORKAS:

There are multiple factors and I appreciate the opportunity to explain and I should first thank you and your colleagues for a \$34 million reprogramming that allowed us to hire additional personnel in a very short term basis, convert part-time personnel to full-time and also pay overtime so that we can be ready for the summer surge in volume.

The TSA -- there was a purposeful effort to reduce staffing over a number of years and move to a risk-based methodology that relied on TSA precheck and other group accelerators to include managed inclusion, a program that we have since eliminated, both following the Inspector General's report and also under Administrator Neffenger's leadership and assessment of the security imperative.

We have suffered attrition because of the pay that TSA employees receive and because many of them are part-time looking for full-time opportunities. And there are better opportunities in what can be a transitional workforce by virtue of that part-time status.

So there are multiple reasons, and we are tackling each and every one of those. We are converting quite a number of part-time positions to full-time positions. We are taking a look at the pay structure which of course we would need to partner with Congress to alter. The TSA employees are not on a GS pay schedule.

We're also taking a look at the staffing models that we employ. For example, we have skilled screeners, airport screeners performing functions that don't necessarily require those talents and we want to move those talents to where they are needed and employ people as divestiture operators, those that communicate to passengers in line that they need not take off their shoes if they're in a TSA precheck line but if they're not they need to take off their shoes, their coats, et cetera.

JOHNSON:

San Francisco is contracting with a private firm to do the TSA security, correct?

MAYORKAS:

Yes it is.

JOHNSON:

How many other airports are using that same model?

MAYORKAS:

I know there are others, I don't have the exact number. Our ability to staff the security at airports is a voluntary -- it's a partnership with the local airport. It's a voluntary relationship. What I think is critical from a security perspective is even if it's a private company they must of course maintain security protocols according to our standards.

JOHNSON:

So the question I had -- are those private sector contract companies -- are they the same long lines at those airports?

MAYORKAS:

San Francisco Airport is a major hub that does have some wait time issues. They are not as acute as some of our top airports, and I should say it's the top airports at peak times that create the wait time phenomenon, and we are focused therefore on the top 20 airports at the peak times, and surging staffing accordingly.

JOHNSON:

We are going to have Admiral Neffenger here, I think on June 6th or 7th, so I'll get into greater detail with him. I know he's been doing a top to bottom assessment of this, looking -- you talked

about a layered approach toward border security, I want to talk a little bit about a layered approach to airport security as well. We had a hearing very interesting hearing, the dogs of DHS. I'm a big proponent of canine units. There's no technology that even comes close to the ability of the nose of a dog.

Can you talk a little bit about -- it's been a year under Admiral Neffenger, he's been doing this basic assessment -- how close are we toward a re-engineering of airport security?

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Admiral Neffenger's a phenomenal leader and I use that adjective advisedly. The assessment is underway but the changes are underway as well. Admiral Neffenger has not waited to complete the assessment before implementing the reforms that are already identified as needed. You mentioned canines. We've deployed additional canines and are looking to deploy more. They are in fact an extraordinarily effective tool, both from a security perspective and critically from a through-put perspective.

Because individuals who pass the canine review, if you will, can go through expedited screening just as though they had enrolled and succeeded in being approved for TSA precheck. So the canine deployments from a risk-based approach re-engineering the precheck process, maximizing the marketing of the TSA precheck -- it's a security imperative. It's also a through-put advantage.

We went last year from a daily average of 3,000 enrollees into TSA precheck to now we're close to an average daily enrollment of 15,000. I think two days ago we reached 16,000 mark. So those are two examples of the reforms that he has instituted while the assessment is underway, not waiting until it's completed.

JOHNSON:

OK. Just so you know, I'll be highly supportive of beefing up an increase in units of canine units. I think it's one of the best things we can do in terms of layered approach.

Senator Carper.

CARPER:

Thanks, Mr. Chairman, I hadn't planned to address TSA but it's something I think we're all interested in. I flew back in from Hanoi, came back in through San Francisco and connected yesterday morning and landed at Dulles. What I've witnessed in travel there and earlier in the month of May and April -- most folks on this Committee have TSA precheck and that's how we get through airports. Time and again I went quickly through TSA prechecks and saw long lines of people waiting who were not TSA precheck folks.

I know one of the -- in talking with Admiral Neffenger several times in the last two weeks -- one of the things that we've got to do is collective responsibility, we've got to get more people in these trusted traveler programs. And the numbers that you just cited, we're up to 16,000 per week where

previously TSA was at 5,000 a week in sign-ups, we've tripled that, that's very, very good, we want to continue to do that.

The TSA used to have a marketing program where it used a media -- paid media program. They haven't used that for a while and I think they're ramping that up to get the message out again. It's a pretty good TV commercial. Or put it online. People waiting there for 10, 20, 30, 40 minutes to get through regular checks and people zipping by, going through TSA precheck -- it's a great commercial, very easy to understand.

But there's a problem at TSA. They've got a talk tough job. They have people wanting to get through security and get on their planes and go someplace, and by the same token we've got to make sure that nobody gets through that's going to create mischief or mayhem on an airplane. There's a tension, that we have to deal with. You got a terrific leader.

I don't know who figured out to ask Admiral Neffenger to be the head of TSA but you've got a great leader, and some of the problems that we had in Chicago that you mentioned were management problems. They knew the folks were coming -- they should have known -- they should have staffed for it, and failure of leadership in that instance and leadership I understand has been changed and that is good.

At Heathrow they're doing some very interesting things modernizing the procedure you go through for the security checks. I understand that Delta is funding a couple of lanes that are 21st century lanes at the airports down in Atlanta, and that's good. We want to encourage other airlines to do the same kind of thing. I'm told the processing time for people going through TSA, rather through regular checks by 25 percent.

Jeh Johnson, our secretary sent a letter to Fortune 100 companies, asked them to consider paying for TSA participation for their employees, particularly the ones that are more senior, and that's something I would urge us to do on our own. We have Fortune 500 companies in our state. Why don't we, as members of our Committee, send a copy of Jeh Johnson's letter with our own saying, "This is what Secretary Johnson has asked the 100 companies to do. Why don't you consider doing the same thing as well?"

CARPER:

Private sector pilots have said, the Chairman has mentioned this, there was a number of pilots we have, private sector, I don't know, a half-dozen airports around the country where the private sector actually is doing this, I think there's an authorization for maybe three more of those.

But the last thing I want to say is just leadership. Leadership is the most important element in any organization I've ever been a part of. Whether it's this organization or the ones that you all are part of in State and at DHS, we need strong leadership and you've got a great leader. And Admiral Neffenger, we look forward to having him here before the committee. That's all I really wanted to talk about. But it is timely and it's important.

I just want to say that people at TSA -- when I go through TSA, I thank the people who work there. If they're doing a good job, I thank them. I can't tell you how many times people have said to me, nobody's ever thanked me. Nobody's ever thanked me before.

I tell them who I am and what I do. And people appreciate this. Sort of the two of the most important words when people are doing a good job is just to say thank you. I want to pick up if I can. We've had a number of hearings as you know, Secretary Mayorkas, because we have a number of hearings here on visa waiver.

People have considered it -- a visa waiver is a soft underbelly. It's a -- they'd understand how it's marked from a travel facilitation program years ago, to one where we get more information on the 38 countries that we partner with.

Would you just take a minute to just briefly mentioned some of the ways we've tightened up pre-check to make it -- not pre-check, but visa waiver to make sure that it's -- that we got all the information more and more information that's valued to protect us. And at the same time, we protect our security. Thank you.

SIBERELL (?):

Thank you very much Ranking Member Carper. With respect to the visa waiver program, I would answer the question in two parts: one is with respect to the individual traveler. An individual traveler who seeks to avail him or herself of the visa waiver program must, of course, submit an application beforehand.

And we have strengthened that application to capture more data so we know more about the individual traveler before they arrive in the United States. We've added, in fact, 22 additional fields to the application. And those additional fields have, in fact, elicited data that has been very material to our security determinations whether to allow a visa waiver program applicant to arrive here in the United States under that program.

So from the analysis and assessment of the individual traveler, we have strength the application form in very significant ways. And then, for a country to qualify as a visa waiver program country, there are of course statutory requirements that are very critical to our Homeland Security mission.

And there are additional requirements that we ourselves have imposed. And Secretary Johnson has strengthened those requirements. The participating country must have a visa refusal rate that is under a particular percentage to ensure that they are not a source of visa fraud. We have critical Homeland Security and law enforcement partnership agreements that a country must sign and must implement in order to qualify as a visa waiver program country.

And we use the visa waiver program as a mechanism to drive better cooperation, better information sharing with key, international partners. And so, from both a micro and a macro perspective, the visa waiver program actually enhances our homeland security.

CARPER:

All right. Thank you. One last quick question today. The 2016 Omnibus Appropriations bill that we provided to the Department of Homeland Security, I think, about \$10 million for grants to counter violent extremism. And \$10 million is not a lot of money. It sounds like it is, but it isn't.

How is DHS going to ensure that it has ample resources to effectively deal with this threat? How can we help further?

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much senator. The challenge of violent extremism is one of our top priorities. The secretary has made it one of his top five priorities. We created the Office for Community Partnerships to strengthen our efforts in this critical mission area. And its name is actually very significant.

Because, what we used to do frankly, is we used to have discrete lines of effort throughout the department. Separate agencies and separate offices had very important and very effective work underway.

But we were not united in our effort and we were not necessarily aligned in our allocation of resources. And under the secretaries' umbrella initiative of Unity of Effort, we brought all of those resources and all of those efforts together in the Office for of -- for Community Partnerships. And why the name is important is that ultimately, the community itself is the most effective means of countering of violent extremism.

And what we do is we equip, we assist, we train and we empower local communities in the struggle. And under George Salem's (ph) leadership, we are going to allocate the \$10 million to which -- for which we are very thankful, in a grant program that FEMA will administer. We are tapping into FEMA's grantmaking expertise to administer, to ensure that we employ those funds as effectively and usefully as possible.

In fact, we're engaging with stakeholders now to ensure that the plans that we develop are in fact the plans the communities themselves believe are most prudent and most effective. It's a very difficult challenge. ISIL is extraordinarily sophisticated and extraordinarily focused on its propaganda internationally and it's very able use of social media in its effort to radicalize individuals here in our homeland.

And so, we have to counter that message as you have alluded to earlier. And we cannot do it of course, as a government alone. We need to partner not only with communities, but also the private sector. And we are working with technology companies, students, universities and colleges to really engage in the counter violent extremism messages in a peer-to-peer format, which we think is the most effective way to proceed.

JOHNSON:

Thank you for all of that.

Senator Portman.

PORTMAN:

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thanks for holding another hearing on a critical topic. I will say, we haven't made much progress. And with all due respect to what we just heard about some of the new approaches that are being taken, I think it's hard for us to sit here this morning and say that ISIS is in fact being contained, which is what the administration has said on occasion. Of course, ISIS was also called the JV and ISIS was called a bunch of guys and a truck.

I think that was all misleading rhetoric. And sadly, if you look at what's happened, you have to see that ISIS continues to grow. It continues to grow in a lot of respects. One is a destabilizing effect in the Middle East, well beyond Syria now. Obviously, we're once again trying to retake Fallujah. And we have more and more military assets going into Iraq after surreptitiously pulling out of Iraq.

I think you have to also say that they've further destabilized Europe. The chairman talked about the number of refugees that have moved to Europe, many illegally. And we've seen what happened obviously with the attacks in Paris and Belgium.

But it's well beyond that. ISIS also poses a greater threat to the United States based on everything that we're hearing in public testimony. And I assume you two would not disagree with that. That it's a greater threat today than it was last time we held a hearing.

Their ability to reach out to people continues to grow. When you look at what's happening on the internet and the real social media communications going on, we're losing the battle. And so, my only concern about the back-and-forth this morning, and I have a lot of respect for Mr. Mayorkas, as he knows.

And Mr. Siberell, I don't know you, but it looks like you're, you know, you've got a good background. You're doing your best. But I think there's not a sense of urgency here. And, I think, you know, it's right that we have passed some legislation here of this committee that can be helpful. It's correct that we did provide some more funds for some of these important uses.

But I would say, on all three levels as I see them, one is the military level, really going after ISIL, particularly in Syrian and Iraq. I do not believe that we're doing what we should be doing to be more aggressive, to be able to take out their ability to attack us and attack Europe and other places.

Second, on the border security front, we continue to have gaps. And, you know, as the FBI director told us in this committee we have serious gaps in intelligence to be able to know who the Syrian refugees are who come to this country. And yet, they're coming. And then finally, I think perhaps the most important area, the one we haven't yet been able to figure out is, is this -- what I would say counterterrorism communication to put it broadly, and it's specifically online.

And I looked at some recent data. You know, we are facing a very effective opponent online. They have a very slick narrative. We see when we're asked to look at some of the ISIS propaganda

online, we tend to see the stuff that has to do with violence and extremism. Here's a report that we got recently.

A single month this summer, 52 percent of the nearly 900 propaganda messages that ISIS sent out were focused on quality of life issues, 37 percent hit military themes. And only 2 percent touched on brutality or violence.

So, they're sophisticated. They are reaching out to alienated youth in the West. And elsewhere, we see this. I mean, I don't think we can say that there are fewer jihadists going to the Middle East can we? I mean, I think it's increasing. The number of foreign fighters is increasing.

So, I guess what I would say this morning is, what are we doing that is responding to this increased capability they have, to the urgency of this problem? I mean, what would you say is the most important thing we should be doing?

I noticed Mr. Siberell, you've talked about the global engagement center at the State Department. We talked about the countering violent extremism effort at the Department of Homeland Security. We've talked about the Office of Community Partnerships. You talked about Director George Salem this morning. I know these are nascent groups. They're all about a year old or less, I think, at the State Department.

I assume the State Department has started this new group because the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Communication was not working well, had not provided the kind of countermessaging that you had hoped. Are you all working together? And, you know, I think it's great that there's a unity of effort now at the Department of Homeland Security.

Is there a unity of effort in terms of our government? And would you say -- maybe, I'll ask you, Mr. Siberell first, would you say that we are effectively countering this message and that we've talked about this morning?

SIBERELL:

Thank you senator. The coordination among and within our government on this issue is definitely strengthening. It's a major challenge. I would agree with you that ISIL's use of propaganda, the use of a social media and the internet to propagate their message and to use the internet as a very effective tool to recruit new members, really has been unprecedented.

And it was -- it's not something that we've seen used as effectively by any other group previously. I think their message has been blunted. That narrative of victory that they relied upon so successfully in their early period of recruitment -- if you think in the 2014, early 2015 era, there's been significant losses that ISIL has suffered. That big narrative victory, that narrative of victory has been blunted somewhat.

They are not delivering effectively on governance. And you noted the statistics on -- they're focused on 52 percent of their messaging on quality of life. Well, they've suffered in their ability to provide that quality of life.

And the Global Engagement Center is a new effort. It is intended to build broad networks globally to coordinate messaging. Again...

PORTMAN:

How long has it been up and running?

SIBERELL:

Just since earlier this year. There was a new executive order that authorized the establishment of the Global Engagement Center.

PORTMAN:

Do we still have the Center for Strategic Counterterrorism Information?

SIBERELL:

No.

PORTMAN:

And why not?

SIBERELL:

It folded into the Global Engagement Center.

PORTMAN:

Yeah. So you were suggesting that their narrative is less compelling now because they've had fewer victories and because they can't focus as much on quality of life issues. Does this mean there are fewer foreign fighters that are being attracted to the Middle East?

SIBERELL:

Well, the cumulative number of foreign fighters is something we've -- is unprecedented. That's something we've never seen in any previous...

PORTMAN:

I'm going to restate the question. Are you saying that it is effective in what we're actually all looking for, which is fewer foreign fighters, fewer of these let's say alienated youth from the Western countries particularly being attracted to the Middle East? Is that happening?

SIBERELL:

We believe there has been a decrease in the number of foreign fighters traveling to the conflict, yes.

PORTMAN:

So you think there's a -- there's a decrease in the number of foreign fighters?

SIBERELL:

Yes.

PORTMAN:

Can you give me any information on that in a follow-up communication as to why you think that and what your numbers are based on?

SIBERELL:

I'd be happy to do that. I think this is -- these are numbers and conclusions that also come out of our intelligence community, their observations of less force strength of ISIL.

PORTMAN:

So you would disagree with me this morning. You think we are turning the tide. You think there are fewer foreign fighters coming into the Middle East, and therefore less of a risk to the United States.

SIBERELL:

I think that there has been a decrease in foreign fighter entry into the Syria-Iraq conflict, but there's been an increase in other places -- Libya as an example. There are other places that ISIL does continue to attract new adherents, new followers. They continue, as you pointed out, to associate themselves with existing insurgencies. And that is a problem. It's not something that's localized in Iraq and Syria, as you've noted. It's a global phenomenon that we have to confront around the world, not simply in one -- one single place, as difficult as that is.

PORTMAN:

I think it would be misleading based on other administration officials who have testified in public -- I'm not talking about our classified briefings -- to say that we're making progress; to say that it is decreasing. But I'd love to see your statistics on that and where you get them.

So, Secretary Mayorkas, would you say that DHS is communicating directly and coordinating with this new GEC office, the Global Engagement Center?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, I am not particularly familiar with that aspect of our communication on the international front. My focus has been domestically, countering the violent extremism messaging of ISIL as it is targeted to the homeland. And I would have to defer to my experts in the international arena to...

PORTMAN:

Well, my time is expired, and I've got to -- thank you, Mr. Chairman, for indulging me.

I guess what I would say is this subcommittee -- I think this committee would be very interested in knowing what the coordination is between State and DHS. Let's face it, social media is not subject to boundaries.

And so the same people you're trying to address in those communities are the same people who are hearing this message overseas. And I would hope that we could have better communication within our government with a unity of purpose.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

JOHNSON:

Senator Peters?

PETERS:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I appreciate our witnesses today on this very, very important topic. And I think it's always important to remember that ISIS is responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Muslims. And we have to actively engage the Muslim community, both abroad as well as the Muslim community in our own states and in this country.

As a senator from Michigan, I'm blessed to represent a very vibrant Arab-American Muslim community in Michigan. Some of the most patriotic individuals that I've ever met are part of that community. And certainly they need to be a part of any solution to counter the -- the radical extremism that we see from ISIS and the recruitment efforts that are occurring in our community.

Mr. Siberell, I understand, or in fact I have a copy of a new report that just came out I believe just yesterday on the Department of State and USAID's joint strategy on countering violent extremism. The panel, could you summarize what you think are the key parts of this new strategy and how does it differ from the past? And why do we believe that this will be more successful than anything we've done in the past?

SIBERELL:

Thank you, Senator, for the question.

Yesterday, we did release the joint State-USAID countering violent extremism strategy. It's the first time the State Department and USAID have released such a strategy. What it gets at is the essential determination conclusion that our effort in confronting violent extremism, terrorism globally needs to be more comprehensive.

It needs to -- we need to scale-up our effort to better understand the drivers and roots of the radicalization that is leading to recruitment into these terrorist groups, that is enabling these groups to continue to recruit and identify and track new members, despite the fact that they offer only misery and death and destruction in their own communities that they control.

We understand that we've had significant success in blunting the capabilities of groups over time, and certainly great success through intelligence, military, law enforcement efforts in removing terrorist leadership, yet these groups continue to attract new followers.

So this strategy is a -- is an acknowledgement of the fact that our approach -- and when I say "our," it's the United States working in partnership with countries around the globe, needs to be expanded to better understand what is driving people to be attracted to the ideology that these groups propagate, and what can be done to address those factors in more effective fashion.

So it lays out a series of strategic objectives. The first of which is to invest more seriously in research itself, better understanding what are these drivers and the factors leading to radicalization. It then discusses the importance of building international understanding of effective measures that can be adopted by governments at the national and sub-national levels.

It addresses the importance of orienting -- orienting some of our capacity building and development efforts towards those drivers, beginning to blunt the radicalization process. And also help countries deal with those who may have been radicalized, to de-radicalize and be provided off-ramps, effectively, to -- to joining up with these organizations.

It also addresses the importance of effective counter-narratives. And that is an area where are investing, and the Global Engagement Center will be leading in that effort. And it is a -- the Global Engagement Center, just to address the senator's earlier question -- it is an interagency organization housed at the State Department, but with representation from across the federal government.

And then finally, the strategy addresses the importance of rehabilitation and reintegration efforts. And these are for efforts related to those who have, for instance, entered into the detention system,

the prison system, and what governments can do to better reintegrate those or rehabilitate those who have renounced violence.

So the strategy, we believe, provides us a strong framework to more coherently implement policies and programs around the world to develop this more comprehensive approach that we believe is merited.

PETERS:

Thank you. And that's an overview of what's happening overseas.

Mr. Mayorkas, if you could talk a little bit about what's happening in our local communities. As I mentioned, outside of my time of vibrant Arab-American Muslim communities that we have here in the United States, and in particular Michigan. I know your department has engaged with the community on a regular basis. Secretary Johnson's been in the community as well.

Could you give us an assessment of where we are? How important those efforts are? And what we should expect in the future?

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much, Senator.

Secretary Johnson has actually visited and engaged with quite a number of communities across the country. I visited Detroit a number of years ago in my prior capacity at U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, for the very same purpose, from a different perspective at that time. And I've also, of course, visited in Minneapolis, Boston and New York.

Our efforts in the community are absolutely vital. And one of the things that we are very focused on as a department and quite frankly across the government is actually being in the community and finding and identifying and empowering and equipping local trusted voices to be the critical messengers in the -- in the battle to counter violent extremism, whether they be faith leaders, educators, parents, civic leaders and the like.

Our Office for Community Partnerships equips local communities with tools, with toolkits, and messages. Also helps them identify the symptoms of an individual on the path to radicalization. Across the administration, we created the Interagency Task Force to Counter Violent Extremism, to make sure that unity of effort is not only accomplished within the Department of Homeland Security, but across the government.

And so we have harnessed the resources of the Federal Bureau of Investigations, the National Counterterrorism Center and other agencies that are focused on the security and safety of the American people.

We work in the communities, with the communities, partnering with them to really amplify the voices and really employ the tools to reach the people who are on the path to radicalization.

PETERS:

And the number of communities that you mentioned, and others that I know you're involved in, what have you found the reaction from those communities? Have they been active and willing partners? And do you consider them strong allies in your efforts?

MAYORKAS:

We very much consider them very strong allies. They themselves share the concern not only for the safety of the nation, but for the safety of their respective communities. No one -- no parent wants to lose a child to violent extremism. No parent wants to see a child travel to a conflict zone and join a terrorist organization -- no responsible parent, of course.

And so we are -- they are close allies. We have brought in leaders from communities across the country, into the Department of Homeland Security, into our offices, to understand their perspectives; to better understand the sensitivities; and to frankly learn from them how best we can partner together. We do not, of course, have a monopoly on the best ideas on how to both work with and to impact the communities that we are trying to reach.

And so it's very much a collaborative effort. It's very much a partnership with those communities.

PETERS:

Thank you. My time is expired, but I appreciate the efforts of both of you. Thank you.

MAYORKAS:

Thank you.

JOHNSON:

Senator Ayotte?

AYOTTE:

Thank you, Chairman.

Secretary Mayorkas, when we have a visa waiver application, is that application cross-checked with both our terror watch list and our no-fly list?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, yes, that application -- the data in that application is run through multiple databases. And I should say the visa waiver program traveler is vetted at a number of different points...

AYOTTE:

So beyond -- OK, so you've got terror watch list, no-fly list. I assume there's obviously our FBI criminal database, the NCI -- you know, the -- the records-keeping process for our criminal records. What other databases?

MAYORKAS:

It is the watch list, the no-fly list, our law enforcement databases you have identified, and also other intelligence databases. And I can certainly provide subsequent to this hearing greater specificity on which of those databases is checked. But it's a full complement of databases.

AYOTTE:

So here's my question. When we look at the attacks that happened both in Paris, number one, and then subsequently in Brussels, my question is this. We know that many of the European countries, and in particular four countries -- the United Kingdom, Germany, France and Belgium -- have actually received some of the greatest numbers of the foreign fighters that have gone back and forth between either Iraq and Syria.

And my question is pretty straightforward. Either the Paris -- those that we know were involved in the Paris attacks, or the Brussels attacks, were any of those individuals not on our terror watch list or our no-fly list, which is obviously a smaller subset of the terror watch list? Or our other databases? Do you know the answer to that?

MAYORKAS:

I do not. I would defer to our experts and I will certainly follow up with you, Senator.

AYOTTE:

So, this is a really important question. And the reason I think it's a really important question is we're only as good as the information that we have. And we can add additional questions on the visa waiver checklist, but we don't do an in-person interview with those that apply for the visa waiver program. Correct?

MAYORKAS:

We do not do a consular interview, that is correct.

AYOTTE:

Right. I mean, that's -- it's a pretty large program with 38 countries involved. So we're not doing an in-person interview. We've added some additional questions, but it's -- it's really what comes in and what goes out that's most important to how valid -- how we're doing.

So I think it's really important for this committee to understand, (A), any of the individuals that we know have been identified that have been involved in Paris, that have been identified with Brussels, were they on the terror watch list? Were they on -- were they on any of our other databases? If not, then we better understand why not. And we better understand as we look at the countries of origin, that we see if there are gaps in our information sharing.

And the reason I ask is because it's been pretty widely publicized, for example, that Belgium had very serious issues with their law enforcement capability here, as we know that information was shared from countries like Turkey about at least one of the individuals involved in the attacks that were not acted upon.

And so would you agree with me this is pretty important for us to understand, because it's only as good as the information we have in terms of how this vetting happens.

MAYORKAS:

If I may, senator. This is absolutely an important issue. Whether or not an individual is on a no-fly list is not necessarily dispositive of whether our security vetting would prevent an individual who would pose a threat or danger to the United States.

AYOTTE:

Well, I would agree, but we're more likely, if they're not on the terror list, which is a broader list than no-fly. No-fly is a subset of terror. If they're not on terror or they're not in our SDI database, or they're not in some of these other databases that we obviously can't discuss here, if they're nowhere, it's a lot less likely that we're going to discover them. Would you agree with me on that?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, not necessarily.

AYOTTE:

OK. Tell me why you think we're going to discover them?

MAYORKAS:

If I may. So, and I'll keep it specific to the visa waiver program. The application that a traveler must complete is a very comprehensive application. And in fact, in our effort to strengthen the visa waiver program, that application has become even more comprehensive.

And so we have picked up data of an individual traveler that is not necessarily in databases, but we have picked up data about that traveler that has revealed information that has enabled us to deny that individual's ability to travel based on...

AYOTTE:

So let me ask you this. How many visa waiver applications are there? How many are in the program? How many people?

MAYORKAS:

I would have to get you that data.

AYOTTE:

I think it's important to understand that. Because -- and how much individual investigation is done on each of those applications?

(CROSSTALK)

AYOTTE:

So in other words, when I get an application, if I'm an investigator, how much follow-up is done on each application?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, what I would appreciate is the opportunity to have our experts brief you in a classified setting as to how we address the extraordinary amount of information we receive on those applications.

AYOTTE:

OK. So this is just what I'm trying to get at here. We know that there were deficiencies in Belgium. In the past, you know, I know that the secretary is looking at countries of concern. But information sharing is the critical piece here, for us to protect our citizens, whether in the visa waiver program or not. But in particular with this category of individuals because they don't have to take the extra step to get a visa.

And I think it would be important whether it's in a classified setting or not, that we understand, (A), the individuals that were involved in Brussels and Paris, were any of them on any of our intelligence databases? Number one.

Number two, how many folks do we have actually in this visa waiver program? Number three, on a hard paper application, how many of those do we have the opportunity to actually individually investigate aspects of that -- of that application?

So that's why the lists become important. That's why the intelligence databases become important, because presumably with the numbers, we can't individually investigate each application. So, what worries me is that you have a significant obviously number of foreign fighters that have returned

to these European countries. And the sharing of information with our allies is critical. It's also the critical piece to this how effective our visa waiver program is.

So I know my time is up, but I hope that we'll have an opportunity to really break this down, so we can understand fully how thorough the vetting is in this program.

Thank you.

MAYORKAS:

Mr. Chairman, may I seek your indulgence to make a statement.

JOHNSON:

Sure. Because I'm going to seek your indulgence next.

MAYORKAS:

This is a very, very important point. Allow me to make a number of points.

First, we vet every single application of a visa waiver program traveler -- every single one. Number one.

AYOTTE:

And what does that vetting involve?

MAYORKAS:

That involves checking against our databases, not only the name of the individual, but also pinging against our databases and our extensive holdings all of the information that we collect through that application.

And so sometimes the information that is of secondary importance, if you will, not necessarily pertinent to the individual, but pertinent to other individuals' identities whom we identify on the application, has proven to be quite material in our security vetting. And I could explore further with you in a different -- a classified setting. Number one.

Number two, the ease with which an individual might travel from one European country to another, by way of example, is very different than the ease with which or the difficulty with which someone might travel from a European country to the United States.

Our security protocols at last point of departure airports is extraordinarily robust. And we have multiple layers of security. And so the travel from one foreign country to another is not to be viewed as synonymous with the ability of an individual to travel from one foreign country to the United States specifically.

Thirdly, some -- there is a difference between a refugee, to give a particular example, being processed across a border from one European country to another, and what we consider and what we employ as our security vetting. The difference between the processing of individual, the capturing of the biographic information, and allowing that individual to travel through within the European zone, ultimately to resettle there, is a very, very different process than our multi-tiered rigorous screening of refugees here in the United States.

AYOTTE:

Well, Mr. Secretary, I appreciate your description, but that's why I want to know how many folks are in the database or not; and second, the refugee issue is obviously a separate issue versus I'm a citizen of Belgium, I'm in the visa waiver program, I'm not necessarily, unless we know someone's been, you know, been back and forth, and how good our information is is really important.

So I'd also like to know how much we're able to get, given the volume. I'd like to know what the volume is and how much follow-up, if we don't have someone on a database, are we actually able to do.

Thank you.

CARPER:

Mr. Chairman, I don't normally interject myself into a conversation like this. I'd like to just ask for 30 seconds, just to say something I think is pertinent.

We haven't talked a lot about the pre-clearance program. And I hope at some point we'll have an opportunity to do that. We're trying to grow that. And the idea behind pre-clearance is it pushes out our borders further and further into other places, so that folks that are coming through pre-clearance in other countries, they actually get -- they have interviews; they have their biometrics taken there.

And the other thing is everybody that comes through on visa waiver, when you get to this country, we collect, if I'm not mistaken, their biometrics. They're all fingerprinted. And so it's -- it's -- I -- the (inaudible) gotten better and better as time goes by. Is it perfect? No. Can we do better? Yes, we have to continue to improve it.

But a lot of work is being done and I think we need to acknowledge that.

Thank you.

JOHNSON:

OK. I want to quickly chime in.

From what I know, without giving you my rationale, I believe the greatest threat we have in terms of risk factors, ranked, of foreign fighters or ISIS operatives coming into America, threatening the homeland, the least risk is the refugee program because with proper vetting, we can really take no risks there with the number we're bringing in. So that's the lowest risk.

JOHNSON:

Then I would say the visa waiver program is the next highest risk. But I think our greatest risk are foreign fighters, or ISIS operatives going through Africa into Central America, coming up through our completely porous border.

So just -- that's my ranking in terms of risk assessment -- lowest risk, refugee program; next lowest risk or next highest risk would be visa waiver program; highest risk coming through our porous border. I just want your ranking, Mr. Mayorkas, and yours, Mr. Siberell. Just the ranking, no rationale. We'll talk about it later in my questioning.

What do you think is the lowest risk to the highest risk?

MAYORKAS:

I haven't -- I haven't ranked them. I'd want to think about that. I think all of the...

(CROSSTALK)

JOHNSON:

OK. That's fine.

Mr. Siberell -- think about it, because I'll come back to it in my questioning.

Mr. Siberell, do you have a quick answer to that?

SIBERELL:

I don't have a relative ranking of that either. I would say that with the visa waiver program, as I think we discussed previously, this is a program that enables us and provides us leverage, huge leverage over the visa waiver program partners, to require improvements and strengthening of their own processes, and so therefore makes -- is a border security program, effectively. It's very strong and so...

JOHNSON:

OK. Again, I'm a supporter of it. I think -- I think honestly the ranking is kind of obvious, but think about it and I'll come back to my questions. I don't want to take up any more time of Senator Booker's questioning.

BOOKER:

Gentlemen, thank you very much for the incredibly difficult work you have and do every day, the service you render to our country. I'm grateful to you both.

There were really colossal and consequential intelligence failures in our European allies that allowed some of these horrific attacks to take place. For instance, we understand now that there were a lot of gaps in the ability of E.U. member countries to collect information about people who traveled to fight with ISIS in Syria, Iraq and now even Libya.

Even some of the countries themselves, and we now know that Belgium has got a lot of problems internally from a federal system divided by language, geography, culture. There were eight different security agencies; three languages; seven parliaments. In Brussels, a city of 1.2 million people, there are 19 communes, each with its own mayor and administration.

Their Muslim communities are very different than ours in Europe, in that our Muslim Americans will define themselves as Americans and feel very integrated into society. European Muslims don't have that. There are a lot of challenges with our European allies.

Within the E.U., General Hayden has said that E.U. member states share more with the United States, which is a good thing, than with each other. But this allows challenges and problems in Europe, I imagine, to fester and to explode, as we've seen. Information sharing among E.U. member states today is often compared with where we were pre-9/11, which has a lot of overlapping stovepiped security entities.

And so I'd just like to for a second look at what's happened since the Belgium attack in our European allies, and to see if they are starting to really change their procedures, their policies. And do you believe that there is really political buy-in for sharing across borders in European countries, really around counterterrorism? Is there adequate coordination going on, information sharing and the like?

And either of you can respond.

MAYORKAS:

I'm happy to jump in first, Senator, and thank you very much.

So the issue of information sharing is critical, as I identified in my opening remarks. Of course, critical to homeland security in terms of the sharing of information with us. And it very well may be true that they share more information with us than with each other, because we demand that information in order for travelers to arrive here in the United States either through the visa waiver program or -- or otherwise.

They have, in fact, advanced considerably in the sharing of information, understanding the imperative post-Paris and post-Brussels attacks. And I can cite some specific examples.

We are very encouraged that the European Union passed a passenger name record, a PNR, agreement for the collection and sharing of passenger name record data, information that is a critical snapshot of who the individual is well in advance of the travel within the European territory. Number one.

Number two, they have really empowered and equipped Europol as a central repository of information and cooperation, really a coordination hub of which we participate considerably in the collection and dissemination, the sharing of information. They have now a European Counterterrorism Center in Europol. They have a European Human Smuggling Center in Europol, which -- and that is serving as a great hub.

I think they are making tremendous advances in the collection, in the sharing of information. They have a ways to go. They do not necessarily collect and share passenger name record information with each other. They are marshaling through the privacy and other interests that have served as a challenge in the past.

I think the E.U. PNR agreement is, frankly, a milestone in that effort, and I would defer to my colleagues for -- colleague for any other comments.

SIBERELL:

Well, I would agree with all of that. I think that there is a political will now within the European - within Europe for improving their own systems, integrating watch lists, beginning to collect PNR data, and use that effectively, as Secretary Mayorkas noted.

I think that this political will is there today. It is somewhat late in coming, but it is a factor of the fact that they have large numbers, as we all know, of foreign terrorist fighters who have gone off to Syria. This has been a crisis for some time. The Paris and Brussels attacks really brought this home.

We have seen certainly a change in the way that they are approaching these issues, a greater willingness and understanding that they need to improve their systems; a great openness to work more closely with us even than they had been, which was already close.

BOOKER:

And so, you know, we, after our 9/11 attacks, created the fusion centers which were -- have been really effective, having seen it from a local official, now as a United States senator. You're mentioning things like Europol, but are they really replicating what's been successful here in terms of these -- the fusion centers that we are using? Are we seeing them move rapidly as we did in that direction?

SIBERELL:

What we've seen them do, and I'll also defer to Secretary Mayorkas, is to lay out a series of steps that they need to take to better integrate their systems. I think the aspiration is for ultimately a unified list, like we have developed since 9/11.

But in the meantime, what they need to do is build better integration between their lists, and to ensure that you can have a single point of search against all of their holdings.

And that is an area where we can help them, and we are prepared to provide technical assistance as they work through that project.

BOOKER:

And so on that point, the House just recently passed H.R. 4314, the Counterterrorism Screening and Assistance Act, to accelerate our role in supporting them. And I guess my question is, you know, there's a lot that we have learned, a lot of resources we have, a lot of technology that we've developed.

How can our systems better help them improve their capabilities? Are there things that we should be doing to help share those best practices and provide that kind of technology that this body here should be acting on with great deliberate urgency?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, I would say absolutely yes. And we are. And let me, if I can, give you a bottom line to your question, which is I think they are improving in the sharing of information. They are on the right path. They are not where we need them to be. But we are working to make sure that they are.

I actually am joining the attorney general and others, General Taylor, the leader of our intelligence and analysis office, who is here today. We are going to Europe on Tuesday to address the very issue that you raise. We have offered our technological advances in this area -- the secure real-time platform; the automated targeting system global.

We have offered those critical instruments that we ourselves have developed and of course availed ourselves of to assist them in this imperative, this security imperative.

BOOKER:

Great. And I don't have time to go into this line of questioning, but I just want to reiterate in terms of CVE efforts. There is a problem with government-run CVE efforts because they delegitimized (ph) really the kiss of death when it comes to our involvement in countering a lot of the messaging that was being brought up in earlier questioning.

And I just want to encourage the efforts that I've seen that are going on that are allowing a thousand flowers to bloom that are more authentic voices. And one of the most authentic voices, and I'll just say this in conclusion, is former foreign fighters who themselves have been disillusioned with the

toxicity and the hatred and what they've seen and experienced often are very persuasive as a buffer or an antidote to the toxins that are being spewed by ISIS.

I just would like to say that and encourage you. I was very happy about the State Department and USAID unveiling the joint strategy, but I'm just hoping that we are investing substantively in CVE. And I said this to Secretary Johnson. CVE should not mean law enforcement. It should really mean these other efforts that are going on that are empowering local communities, helping to elevate authentic voices, and really do the things that actually work to counter violent extremism.

MAYORKAS:

Senator, we couldn't agree more. And that is the effort that we are frankly executing. It is not our voice that is going to move the mountain of this challenge, but rather the voices in the community.

I attended an extraordinary, quite frankly, peer-to-peer challenge where students from all over the world competed in developing programs to counter messages. It came from students and it was focused on reaching students. Facebook was a critical partner in that endeavor.

We are working with technology companies so that they serve as platforms for these flowers to bloom. We are working with philanthropic organizations, the community-based organizations, faith leaders, teachers, schools, parents, peers, most critically. And -- and you have identified an extraordinarily powerful voice in those who once were on the wrong path, and have realized the grave problems of their prior ways.

BOOKER:

Thank you, sir. And that's music to my ears, and as a Jersey boy, it's almost like Bruce Springsteen music to my ears. Thank you very much.

JOHNSON:

Senator Ernst?

ERNST:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, thank you for joining us today.

First, I want to start with a comment, because we have had a lot of great discussion this morning, I think, in regards to ISIS propaganda and actually combating that. I know Senator Portman had mentioned earlier in his comments that we really need that government- wide coordination in combating the propaganda, as well as I think work in the communities.

And I -- I share those concerns. I think all of us do. And I have joined with Chairman Johnson and Senator Booker in introducing a bill that would require the President to combat terrorist use of social media. That's where we see so much of this coming out. So I do hope that we are able to move that bill forward in the Senate. And I just want to thank both of you for partnering on that.

We do have a lot of folks that are concerned. We hope to work very well with you as we move through a number of these processes. And then, Deputy Secretary, if I could start with you, please. I do understand the benefits of the Visa Waiver Program. I know that we have it but still some security concerns, Senator Ayotte was echoing some of those. But we have 38 countries that participate in that is what I understand, is that correct?

MAYORKAS:

Yes.

ERNST:

Are all of them meeting the necessary requirements as they go through their vetting?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, thank you very much. The requirements are a prerequisite to joining the Visa Waiver Program and to remaining in the Visa Waiver Program. We have strengthened that Secretary Johnson's leadership. If in fact a country, if we determine or assess that a country is falling short of its obligations under the Visa Waiver Program, then we develop a remediation plan with a timeline and strict requirements to ensure that no traveler that is arriving in the United States poses a threat to the United States.

We have in fact employed that mechanism when a country has fallen short and so we're quite rigorous in the requirements of the Visa Waiver Program.

ERNST:

Are there any of those countries that are not meeting the requirements right now?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, there are. We have them on programs, and any further details I'd be happy to share with you in a different setting.

ERNST:

Certainly, I appreciate that, because that is something that I think the public is concerned about, as we have a number of countries involved in this and the public doesn't really know what's being followed up on. As long as we stay on top of that, it's regular that they're meeting their security requirements, how do we check that? How do we know that?

MAYORKAS:

Yes, and I should say, this underscores one of the critical benefits of the Visa Waiver Program, which is that we do have this leverage with another country. A country that wishes to remain in the Program. We use it as a tool to ensure compliance with extraordinarily stringent obligations that serve the security of our homeland.

It's a perfect example of how the Visa Waiver Program serves as a tool of security rather than otherwise. I do wish the name was changed because the term "waiver" would suggest some sort of relaxation of a security requirement, when in fact the opposite is true. Not only do we capture an enormous amount of information about the individual traveler wishing to avail him or herself of the program, but we also use the Program and other nations' desire to participate in it, as a driver of information sharing, information collection and greater security partnership with the United States.

It really dovetails with the question that Senator Booker posed with respect to how a European country does in its security mechanisms. Perhaps they do better with us than they do with each other - by virtue of their participation in the Visa Waiver Program and their desire to avail themselves of that program.

ERNST:

OK, thank you. I appreciate that explanation. And Mr. Siberell, media reports indicate that we sent a foreign fighter surge team to Brussels a month ago. Excuse me, a month before the attacks there. And what challenges prevented us and the Belgian authorities from preventing the attacks, and additionally, is our surge team still on the ground there? If you could answer that first, please.

MAYORKAS:

Thank you Senator. The surge team that was deployed to Brussels - I should first say that that followed on a cooperation that's been - we've had undergoing with the European countries since 2013 when the problem of individuals traveling to Syria first manifested itself. This was before ISIL was a factor when it was Al Nusra and the Al Qaeda-affiliated groups. So we've had a long dialogue with our European partners on these issues.

After the Paris attacks we had discussions within the government to determine what other things can we do now to push our European partners to a heightened level of cooperation? Are there gaps that we can identify? So we put together interagency teams who went out to Brussels and had a - it's a dialogue that's quite mature and open.

The Belgian government is open to these consultations across issues like document integrity, passport issuance integrity, targeted screening that techniques that we have developed, that DHS in particular has developed, helping to instruct the Belgians on those new techniques. Better integration of watchlists, and improved information sharing - all of these areas were identified in the work plan of that foreign fighter surge team.

So the surge team is - they made initial visit as a group to identify where we would have expanded cooperation, and they are ongoing, actually, so there's a work plan that's been developed and we are continuing to send individuals back and forth. A cadre of Belgians also coming to the United States. It's an elevated partnership, effectively.

ERNST:

OK. Is there anything that could have been done by our surge team to assist before that attack happened? Is there any way we could have helped close up that gap?

MAYORKAS:

I'm not aware of any specific piece of information that would have been provided or revealed by our surge team members prior to the attacks.

ERNST:

As you know - I'm going to jump to the Iraqi Kurds for just a minute as well. As you know, the Iraqi Kurdish forces are one of our critical partners, if not the most critical partner we have in the fight against ISIS. And I understand that the Administration just allocated or designated \$415 million in financial assistance to Iraqi Kurdish forces. Can you provide the Committee with additional detail on where the assistance will come from, who it will be going to, and what purpose that will be for?

MAYORKAS:

Senator, I think I'll have to take that question back and get you an answer. I would, from the counterterrorism perspective I'd agree with you that the Kurdish forces have been among our closest partners and in close coordination with the government of Iraq have provided a critical counter to ISIL and have pushed ISIL out of considerable areas that it encroached upon. Including, in northern Iraq, the Kurds continue to play a critical role with us in the coalition to confront ISIL.

But I'll have to get an answer back to you ...

ERNST:

I would certainly appreciate that. Gentlemen, thank you for being here today. I certainly appreciate your time and effort. Thank you Mr. Chair.

JOHNSON:

Thank you Senator Ernst. Mr. Siberell, in Mr. Mayorkas' opening statement he talked about how ISIS has gone from directing activity to inspiring it. I would agree that Al Qaeda directed, and so that brand of Islamic terror was a centralized operation that directed activity, but my take on ISIS

is that their method of using social media has been to inspire outside of their caliphate, their territory.

They're inspiring but really what concerns me is the progression's been now they're beginning to direct. Is it not true that there are reports that they had a hand in directing the Brussels attack? That they've got - i've heard different names for this but we'll call them external operations unit. Beginning to direct. So they've gone beyond just inspiring to having this external operations unit and starting to direct attacks.

SIBERELL:

Senator, I think you pointed out the essential difference, and why ISIL poses a new kind of challenge than Al Qaeda had previously. Al Qaeda was made up effectively of clandestine cells, individuals who had to become a member had to be vetted effectively by the organization and then operated in a clandestine manner, secretly in a number of locations around the world. In which they devised plots and challenged security of our partners globally.

ISIL works on a completely different model. They do have obviously this core of individuals concentrated in Iraq and Syria, they have a very disciplined military structure to pursue their effort there. But at the same time they make use of the internet, social media, to inspire others. Individuals who may not actually have become members of the group but to act on their behalf. And that also reflects the time difference we have from when Al Qaeda was at its height to where ISIL is today with the internet and social media having access to those platforms in a way that Al Qaeda never was successful in using.

If I could just - answering your question, yes it is true. ISIL is looking to identify - we know they've identified among the foreign fighter cadre, those with skills that could be useful in infiltrating back to their home countries to carry out plots. So the external operations network that ISIL has developed is a very real danger and we've been working against it and had some success in doing so. But it is absolutely the case.

They've also not only trained operatives but they've trained individuals who inspire attacks using social media deliberately, including individuals in the United States.

JOHNSON:

So we may be nibbling around the edges. We may have started to take back some of that territory in Iraq but they are growing, they are evolving, they're metastasizing and they're starting to send out their operatives - let's face it, to the refugee flow, the enormous, the 1.8 million refugees flowing into Europe. And I'm gonna go back to again, my question. Because I think the answer's quite obvious. If the refugee program literally we can assure that - whatever the number is, 10,000 - those refugees might be let in this country should pose no risk.

You set up criteria, women and children, relatives of Syrian- American citizens, they have the financial capability of supporting them - get 10,000 out of 4 million displaced refugees - we can make sure that we take no risks on those refugees. The same with the Visa Waiver Program. I

agree. I think it is a - combined with preclearance we can really reduce the risks. So in the order of what concerns me, of potentially ISIS operatives coming to this country, the least concern I have is the refugee program, then next the Visa Waiver, and by far greatest concern is our porous southern border. Correct?

When we were down in Central America, I heard a new term, a new acronym. SIA. Special Interest Aliens. So isn't that true? And doesn't that also point to the fact that we have to secure our border.

Mr. Siberell, you first.

SIBERELL:

I'll defer to Secretary Mayorkas on the southern border issues, and I think those are three categories of concern and we have to be - ensure that our border security measures are effective in preventing any of those categories of individuals from threatening the American people.

JOHNSON:

I'll also point out that certainly what I've witnessed, ISIS is very strategic. You don't take your foreign force and take over vast territory in Iraq without really planning this thing and being very strategic, and as we watch them dangerously evolve I'm highly concerned. Mr. Mayorkas.

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. First of all we're very, very focused on Special Interest Aliens. Individuals from designated countries that seek to enter the United States illegally. We're extraordinarily focused on that. We may not agree today, Mr. Chairman, on the level of security on the southwest border. That border in our estimation is more secure than it has been in a long, long time.

One of the primary areas of concern ...

JOHNSON:

Let me just stop you right there. In terms of the actual numbers - unaccompanied children from South America. Let me get it here. In 2014 the enormous surge, year to date through April which is the last number we had we had 25,500 unaccompanied children. As of April, 2016 we're at 25,359 - we're at the exact same level, year-to- date, of unaccompanied children.

In terms of family units we're ahead. And in terms of total number of apprehensions on the border, in 2014, year-to-date we were at 261,000. Last year at the same point in time we were down at 182,000. Right now we're at 223,000. I do not see improvement in the security of our border. It just hasn't improved. And it represents an enormous risk.

I'll let you finish.

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. First of all the unaccompanied children and the family units pose a unique challenge because by and large those individuals fleeing the three Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, do not seek to evade law enforcement.

JOHNSON:

I really don't want you to discussing that because it really has nothing to do with ISIS. I was just pointing out that fact in terms of lax security on our border. If you want to talk about the numbers I did, the total apprehensions, which are pretty much at par with where we were in 2014.

MAYORKAS:

And 2014 was far different and far lower than in prior years. But if I may, getting to the point of how we ensure the security of the border, and specifically with regard to the terrorist threat.

One of the challenges in the smuggling of individuals is the transnational criminal organizations and their participation in the smuggling organizations. We have no evidence to suggest that they are willing participants in the smuggling of individuals who are members of terrorist organizations.

MAYORKAS:

In fact we have quite the opposite. That they wish no part in the overt smuggling or participation in the smuggling of terrorists. And perhaps - it would make sense that it is for fear that they would bring even greater force of the United States to bear on their organizations.

The question is, are there low-level individuals in these organizations who unwittingly may be smuggling an individual from one of these countries who is in fact a terrorist. And we are very focused on that. Our law enforcement officers, our border patrol agents are extraordinarily focused on that and we have not observed any increasing concern, but that does not suggest that we don't have an increase in vigilance.

JOHNSON:

Thank you, Mr. Secretary. Senator Carper?

CARPER:

Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I just want to return to this last part of the conversation of -- I want to go back. I quoted Peter Bergen just a moment ago, I'll ask my staff to find that quote for me.

We've been down to the board (ph) here (ph) on Central Mec (ph). As we know, the reason why, these people, kids families are coming up here is because they live hellashish (ph) lives. It's

dangerous. Lack of hope, lack of opportunity. And, the Chairman's put a finger on the root cause in earlier conversations we've had here, and that is our insatiable demand for drugs.

We send money and guns down to Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and they send drugs. And, the gangs and folks that are money and guns use them to make life miserable for our -- thank you. Miserable for folks then.

If we lived down there, if we had kids we'd probably want them to come up here as well, so needle in the haystack problem. I think of the border as a needle in a haystack problem.

We can finally make needles bigger, and we do that with force multipliers, not on just border patrol, but force multipliers in the air, on the ground, and so forth. We also need to make the haystack a lot smaller, and part of that is the work that we're doing in partnership with these three Central American countries, and the (inaudible) Columbia. The partnership that they've established, and that we're helping to support.

I want to go back to -- I told the Chairman, I thought, a few minutes ago I'd ask a number of important questions. One of them was just kind of rank the order of the threat, and he said, I think, wisely, that ISIS -- these guys would be stupid to bed down and foresee a refugee program and most thoroughly vetted program, I think, for people coming into this country. And, the outside chance they ever get here, after two years they're not going to do that.

Visa (ph) Waiver (ph) more and more difficult. We need to continue to tighten that, pre-clearance. We need to grow that. And, some of the other things that we've talked about, but I want to go back to what Peter Bergen said right here in this room when he was testifying. I think it was last November.

In his words, every person who's been killed by jihad terrorist in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident. Been killed by an American citizen or a resident. Our focus, wisely, needs to be how do we reach out to folks in this country, and make sure that they don't become radicalized. And, we can't do it by ourselves because a great partnership, we need to grow those partnerships and work with families and organizations, faith leaders and so forth.

And, continue to work -- that we need to fund it. We need to make them as effective as we can.

I've talked to folks in other countries to see why they are so challenged in Europe by their -- some of the folks in the Muslim community. They've have incredible migration, we've had relatively little. They've had incredibly large numbers, millions of people going from Syria and other places into Europe, and a lot of times when they get to those countries they're not very warmly welcomed, and they end up leading isolated lives in communities by themselves. Blocked off, perceived that they're not welcomed there, that there's not much hope or opportunity.

They are very susceptible to radicalization. And, one of the keys to our tamping down on those threats here -- they're not all gone because people still get radicalized here, but we want people, when they come from Syria or when they come from these other countries where they've been

fleeing horror, we want to -- once we make sure that they're not a threat, we want them to feel a part of this country, and part of the American dream.

And, to the extent that we can continue to keep that alive, we will provide, probably a lot more safety and security for our people than a lot of the other things that we're talking about here today.

Senator Portman asked some questions about ISIS campaign success, and so forth. I just asked my staff to really quickly pull some metrics -- we like metrics here, and I just wanted to add a couple of bullet points.

ISIS recent losses have been severe. They've lost about 40 percent of the territory that they once held in Iraq. Forty percent.

Coalition forces have killed more than 10,000 ISIS fighters and 20 ISIS leaders in recent months, including ISIS chief propagandist and executioner. Just over a week ago American forces carried out a strike, you may recall, that led to the death of ISIS finance chief, and second in command, and simultaneously which enhanced capabilities of the Iraqi counterterrorism forces.

As we know, Iraqi forces recaptured from Ramadi from ISIS in January of this year. Campaigns to seize the ISIS strongholds in Mosul and Fallujah are well underway.

In May 2016 this month FBI Director, Comey said that the rate at which Americans are joining ISIS has dropped precipitously in the last nine months.

In 2014 six-to-ten (ph) Americans were leaving to join ISIS. I believe that was every month. Today it's down to about one per month.

In May 2016 ISIS announced that ISIL controls 14 percent of Iraqi territory. That's down from about \$40.

U.S. Treasury department also estimates that due to the combination of falling oil prices, smuggling interdiction, coalition airstrikes, ISIS oil revenues which feed their efforts are down to as low as \$250 million per year. That's about half of what they used to be.

Are we done? Is it time to spike the football? No. Is what we're doing working? Yes, and we need to continue to do more of that. Find out what works, do more of that.

And, I have a couple of questions -- and I just ask for short answers though.

Mr. Siberell, can you describe for us the kinds of improvements that the foreign fighters surge team is helping Belgians to implement? Additionally, is there a possibility for these teams to be deployed to other countries in Europe?

Just very briefly.

SIBERELL:

Yes. Increased and enhanced information sharing, integration on watch lists, risk based traveler screening. Techniques that we had developed in the United States that would be helpful to Belgians, and other governments. We are looking to deploy those in other European countries.

CARPER:

Good, thank you. I want to -- Your testimony referenced a method by which homegrown extremists support ISIS missions through online hacking, I think you called it, doxxing". Can you just explain to us in a little more detail how this works, and how the Department can help counter this threat? Thank you?

MAYORKAS:

Thank you very much, Senator Carper. Doxxing is the practice of taking the names, and whatever information is available about an individual, and publishing the name and that information, and identifying that individual as a potential target of terrorism.

So, ISIL, and other terrorist organizations, will essentially dox, will take, for example, information about military personnel that they pick-off a website, and they will publish it, and they will identify those individuals as potential targets.

CARPER:

Good, and one more last question for you Ale. How would we, with respect to soft targets, protecting soft targets, how would we increase the security of traditionally unsecured areas, let's say it was an airport, and how would we do so in a way that does not further encumber the wait times for air travelers? And, can you just share with us, maybe a step or two, that DHS has taken toward that goal, please?

MAYORKAS:

Thank you, Senator. So, soft targets have been an area of our focus for quite some time. The airport specifically, you can't -- even before Brussels, as a matter of fact I visited Los Angeles International Airport a little over a month ago and met with the leaders of airport security there to talk about how they secure the perimeter.

This was post-Brussels, but they had started long before. They had visited Israel. It has a great deal of experience in airport security as a place of mass assembly, and they had instituted quite a number of safeguards.

The equipment at the airport, and the manner in which the airport is both designed and built were -- had very much security in mind.

We work through National Protection Programs Directorate, NPPD. I know you don't like acronyms, but the National Protection Programs Directorate...

CARPER:

... I like DHS.

MAYORKAS:

As do I.

(LAUGHING)

MAYORKAS:

As do I.

That organization, under the leadership of Caitlin Durkovich, in our critical infrastructure arena has worked with mall operators, theater owners, restaurant owners throughout the private sector to ensure that they are well trained and well equipped to respond as soft targets to a potential mass casualty event.

CARPER:

Thanks very much. Thank you both for being here today. Thanks for working on your commitment, and to your devotion to our country and the leadership with respect to privacy. This has been a good hearing.

This is going to be a threat that's going to be around facing us in this country and around the world for maybe as long as we're going to be around, and certainly for as long as the eye can see. Have figured out entirely how to deal with it? No. These guys change their tactics, and over time we have to change what we're doing in response. I think we're doing a lot smarter stuff, a lot smarter. Some of the smart things that we need to do.

When I got back, Mr. Chairman -- I was over in Vietnam earlier this week, and talking to a number of folks in that country where we have a much better partnership, a much better partnership than I would have ever imagined when I was a Naval flight officer over there in the war.

But the spirit of working together almost as a team in many respects is pretty amazing given our history there. But, I used this -- a phrase, and I think it probably germane here as well when I said (inaudible), if you want to go fast travel alone. If you want to go far, travel together. If you want to go far, travel together. And, that's really what we're trying to do here, not just in our country, you know?

Congress. Executive branch, the military, and so forth. Homeland Security. But, all across the world, folks know this is a cancer on our planet, and we got to deal with them, but if we go together, work together, pull together, you know? We'll go a long ways. We need to.

Thank you so much.

(UNKNOWN)

Thank you.

(UNKNOWN)

Thank you.

JOHNSON:

Thank you Senator Carper. Unfortunately, what you're saying is true, we're going to be living with this for quite some time. And, it's unfortunate. We're certainly old enough to remember what the world felt like before global Islamic terror raised its ugly head and started slaughtering people.

It's a reality I wish didn't exist, but it's one that does exist. I think this hearing, as I mentioned to the witnesses before hand, the purpose of every hearing, the goal of every hearing, is to deepen our understanding. Lay out the realities, whether we like them or not we have to face them.

That's, kind of, what I've been trying to point out. Here's the reality of the situation, not whether we like it, but we have to face it so we can actually deal effectively with it. So, again, I certainly appreciate the witness time, your thoughtful answers to our questions, and we'll keep working forward. This is going to be a long struggle, but we'll shorten it if we actually admit we've got the problem and face it the way we have to as a committed coalition of the willing of the civilized portions of the world, because this is an attack on civilization, and it's got to be defeated.

So, with that, the hearing record will remain open for 15 days until June 10 at 5:00 PM for the submission of statements and questions. This hearing is adjourned.