

**COUNTERING VIOLENT ISLAMIST EXTREMISM: THE  
URGENT THREAT OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND  
HOME-GROWN TERROR**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

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## **COUNTERING VIOLENT ISLAMIST EXTREMISM: THE URGENT THREAT OF FOREIGN FIGHTERS AND HOME-GROWN TERROR**

**Wednesday, February 11, 2015**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY,  
*Washington, DC.*

The committee met, pursuant to call, at 10:15 a.m., in Room 311, Cannon House Office Building, Hon. Michael T. McCaul [Chairman of the committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives McCaul, Smith, Rogers, Duncan, Perry, Clawson, Katko, Hurd, Carter, Walker, Loudermilk, McSally, Ratcliffe, Thompson, Jackson Lee, Langevin, Higgins, Richmond, Keating, Payne, Vela, Watson Coleman, Rice, and Torres.

Chairman McCAUL. The Committee on Homeland Security will come to order. The committee is meeting today to hear testimony on violent Islamist extremism and the threat of foreign fighters and home-grown terror. I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

Today, at the first hearing of the House Committee on Homeland Security in the 114th Congress, I would like to take a moment of silence to remember all those who lost their lives at the hands of ISIS, especially Americans James Foley, Steven Sotloff, and most recently, Kayla Mueller.

These victims are the reason why we are here today. We must keep these barbaric terrorists out of the homeland to protect the American people. This hearing will also assess the urgent and growing threat of terrorist recruiting and inspiring Americans. We need to accurately define the threat, and that is violent Islamist extremism, and recognize that it is spreading like wildfire around the globe.

These fanatics want nothing less than destruction of our way of life, and now their ability to match words with deeds is growing at an astonishing rate. In recent years, their safe havens have proliferated and their ranks have swelled.

In many ways, we are no longer talking about terrorist groups. We are talking about terrorist armies. ISIS now controls a territory the size of Belgium, governs millions of people, draws on billions of dollars in revenue and commands tens of thousands of foot soldiers.

They are brutal. Their latest act of barbarism was on full display with a horrific murder of a Jordanian pilot. This evolving Islamic terrorist landscape has given rise to the dual threats of foreign

fighters returning to the United States and home-grown terrorism. The recent terror attack in Paris and other attacks and plots in Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and here in the United States are proof that the threat has surged and that the enemy is dead-set on attacking the West.

This map behind me shows a wide-spread surge in ISIS-linked terrorist plots over the last year alone. As Mr. Rasmussen notes in his testimony, more than 20,000 fighters from over 90 countries have made their way to the battlefield to join al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other extremist groups, making this the largest convergence of Islamist terrorists in world history.

That number continues to grow despite months of air strikes. Up to 5,000 of these fighters are Westerners, many of whom are able to travel into the United States without obtaining a visa. And more than 150 American citizens have attempted to or succeeded in getting to the battlefield, and we know that some of them have already returned to our shores. You can see this flow depicted in the graphic behind me.

But extremists do not need to travel overseas in order to become a threat to our homeland. Through Hollywood-like propaganda videos and social media and through that means, Islamist terror groups are inciting their followers and potential recruits to wage war at home.

Both ISIS, and Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have called for Westerners, including Americans, to wage individual jihad in their home countries, and it is working. ISIS social media also gives step-by-step instructions on how to get to the fight and how to return.

Following the attacks in Paris last month, our European partners have been busy uncovering new terrorist cells and disrupting imminent plots. Also, just recently here at home, the FBI arrested an Ohio-based ISIS sympathizer who was intending to attack the United States Capitol with pipe bombs.

I am worried about our ability to combat this threat abroad, but also here at home. I wrote to the President recently and raised concerns that we still have no lead agency in charge of countering domestic radicalization and no line item for it in the budgets of key departments and agencies.

I am also concerned that the few programs we do have in place are far too small to confront a threat that has grown so quickly.

Today, I hope to hear how the administration assesses the danger posed by foreign fighters, particularly Westerners, and the threat of home-grown terrorism here in the United States. More importantly, I hope we will hear about how the administration is responding and how it plans to ramp up its response to those challenges.

This morning, I would like to welcome all of our witnesses, but especially Mr. Rasmussen with the National Counterterrorism Center, in his first appearance before Congress after being confirmed as director, and we look forward to his testimony.

As part of our committee's focus on this critical National security issue, the Ranking Member and myself are establishing a task force on combating terrorist and foreign fighter travel. The 6-month task force will review U.S. Government efforts, focusing on DHS,

to disrupt terrorist travel into our country and to combat the foreign fighter threat. It will ultimately provide recommendations to the committee on how we can improve U.S. security against these dangers.

I must say I am very disappointed that the State Department chose not to send a witness here today. The threats we are discussing are serious, and the State Department plays a key role in combating them.

I recently sent a letter to the White House expressing my concerns over the Department's desire to resettle tens of thousands of Syrian refugees here in the United States. I am worried that ISIS could exploit this effort in order to deploy operatives to America via a Federally-funded jihadi pipeline.

Before closing, I would like to again reiterate what I said at our organizational meeting last month. Mr. Thompson, we look forward to working with you to accomplish our shared goal of protecting the homeland.

[The statement of Chairman McCaul follows:]

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL T. MCCAUL

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Today, at the first hearing of the House Committee on Homeland Security in the 114th Congress, I'd like to take a moment of silence to remember all those who lost their lives at the hands of ISIS, especially Americans James Foley, Steven Sotloff and, most recently, Kayla Mueller.

The victims are the reason why we are here today. We must keep those barbaric terrorists out of the homeland to protect the American people. This hearing will also assess the urgent and growing threat of terrorists recruiting and inspiring Americans.

We need to accurately define the threat—violent Islamist extremism—and recognize it is spreading like wildfire around the globe. These fanatics want nothing less than destruction of our way of life, and now their ability to match words with deeds is growing at an astonishing rate. In recent years, their safe havens have proliferated and their ranks have swelled.

In many ways, we are no longer talking about terrorist groups. We are talking about terrorist armies. ISIS now controls a territory the size of Belgium, governs millions of people, draws on billions of dollars in revenue, and commands tens of thousands of foot soldiers. And they are brutal—their latest act of barbarism was on full display with the horrific murder of the Jordanian pilot.

This evolving Islamist terror landscape has given rise to the “dual threats” of foreign fighter returnees and home-grown terrorism. The recent terror attack in Paris, and other attacks and plots in Belgium, Germany, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, and here in the United States are proof that the threat has surged and that the enemy is dead-set on attacking the West.

As Mr. Rasmussen notes in his testimony, more than 20,000 fighters from over 90 countries have made their way to the battlefield to join al-Qaeda, ISIS, and other extremist groups—making this the largest convergence of Islamist terrorists in world history. That number continues to grow despite months of air strikes. Up to 5,000 of these fighters are Westerners, many of whom are able to travel into the United States without obtaining a visa. More than 150 American citizens have attempted to or succeeded in getting to the battlefield—and we know some have already returned to our shores.

But extremists do not need to travel overseas in order to become a threat to our homeland. Through Hollywood-like propaganda videos and social media, Islamist terror groups are inciting their followers and potential recruits to wage war at home. Both ISIS and Yemen-based al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula have called for Westerners—including Americans—to “wage individual jihad” in their home countries—and it's working. ISIS social media also gives step-by-step instructions on how to get to the fight and how to return.

Following the attacks in Paris last month, our European partners have been busy uncovering new terrorist cells and disrupting imminent plots. Also, just recently

here at home, the FBI arrested an Ohio-based ISIS sympathizer who was intending to attack the U.S. Capitol with pipe bombs.

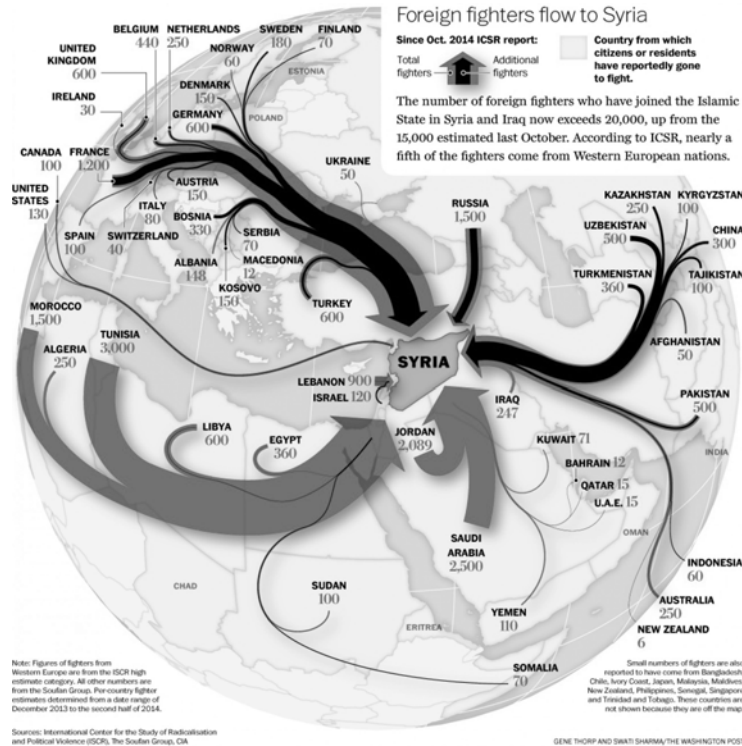
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This morning I would like to welcome all of our witnesses but especially Mr. Rasmussen. It is his first appearance before Congress after being confirmed as the Director of the NCTC, and we look forward to his testimony.

As part of our committee's focus on this critical National security issue, the Ranking Member and myself are establishing a Task Force on Combatting Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel. The 6-month task force will review U.S. Government efforts—focusing on DHS—to disrupt terrorist travel into our country and to combat the foreign fighter threat. It will ultimately provide recommendations to the committee on how we can improve U.S. security against these dangers.

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## How Many Wake Up Calls Do We Need? ISIS Linked Terror Plots Outside of Iraq & Syria (2014-Present)



Note Source: Developed by Committee on Homeland Security Majority Staff from open source data

Chairman MCCAUL. With that, the Chairman now recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your comments, as well as for holding today's hearing.

I would like to also welcome Director Rasmussen for his first appearance before this committee as the director of the National Counterterrorism Center. As well, I would also thank the rest of the panel for testifying about the Federal Government's effort to identify and deter foreign fighters and the Government's efforts to counter violent extremism.

I would like to express my condolences at the beginning to the family of the 26-year-old Kayla Mueller, an American aid worker who was taken hostage by the Islamic State of Iraq. U.S. officials have confirmed she was killed by the terrorist group. Mr. Chairman, Ms. Mueller's death and other recent terrorist attacks across the world over the past few months have magnified the nature of the evolving threat from the terrorist groups and state actors. The heinous actions by ISIL, including the beheading of a Japanese journalist and the terrorist group's burning of a Jordanian pilot further illustrates the abhorrent nature of this terrorist group.

Last month, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that the radical ideology of ISIL is causing other terrorist groups to rebrand themselves and emulate ISIL.

Top U.S. officials have made public statements that foreign fighters linked to ISIL may pose a direct threat to this country. Moreover, those inspired by the ideology of ISIL, al-Qaeda, and other groups are of concern.

As we look to these threats, we cannot take a myopic view. Each attack from terrorist groups have reemphasized the global reach of

terrorist activity. For instance, there was a crippling cyber attack in November on Sony Pictures Entertainment Network. In December, in Sydney, Australia, we witnessed a terrorist attack on a cafe, where at the end of a 16-hour stand-off, two innocent people lay dead.

Then in January in Paris, there was a series of execution-style murders of 12 members Charlie Hebdo's creative team. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has taken credit for this attack.

This serves as a reminder that the terrorist threats we face are evolving quickly. This committee's responsibility is to hold hearings and receive Classified information that lets us know the nature of the threats and how the Federal Government is dealing with the threat.

In spite of this, Mr. Chairman, the Republican majority continues to play political games with funding the Department of Homeland Security. Mr. Chairman, I, too, feel that it is meaningless to have a strategy if the ends are not paired with the means to achieve them. It is my hope that you will make the point to your colleagues and leadership who are holding the funding for a key agency and the Federal Government that Americans look to to detect, deter, and respond to a terrorist hostage situation.

Unfortunately, the Department of Homeland Security is operating under the threat of a shutdown, and it is only funded by a continuing resolution for the next 17 days. It is important that my Republican colleagues act responsibly, stop playing politics, and pass a clean DHS funding bill. Without a fully-funded Department of Homeland Security, some of our key methods of identifying terrorists and preventing terrorist travel will be at risk.

Are we really ready to stand before the American people, those who trust and value that we recognize their needs, and declare for the sake of partisanship we are going to make our Nation more vulnerable by not funding DHS?

Mr. Chairman, I hope not. We have significant challenges before us. You have outlined in your testimony those challenges, but if we don't have a fully-funded Department, one that can't operate on continuing resolution, we put this country, its people, at risk. So whatever it takes for us to deal with this threat, first of all, we have a Department that has the resources to address the threat.

So I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses. But I also look forward to an effort where we can get the Department of Homeland Security treated like every other department of Government, having a budget that carries us until the end of the fiscal year.

With that, I yield back.

[The statement of Ranking Member Thompson follows:]

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER BENNIE G. THOMPSON

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

I would like to welcome Director Rasmussen to his first appearance before this committee as the director of the National Counterterrorism Center. I also thank the rest of the panel for testifying about the Federal Government's efforts to identify and deter foreign fighters and the Government's efforts to counter violent extremism. I would like to express my condolences to the family of 26-year-old Kayla Mueller, an American aid worker who was taken hostage by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. U.S. officials have confirmed she was killed by the terrorist

group. Kayla Mueller's death and other recent terrorist attacks across the world over the past few months have magnified the nature of the evolving threat from terrorist groups and state actors.

The heinous actions by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), including the beheading of a Japanese journalist and the terrorist group's burning of a Jordanian pilot, further illustrate the abhorrent nature of this terrorist group. Last month, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff indicated that the radical ideology of ISIL is causing other terrorist groups to rebrand themselves and emulate ISIL. Top U.S. officials have made public statements that foreign fighters linked to ISIL may pose a direct threat to this country.

Moreover, those inspired by the ideology of ISIL, al-Qaeda, and other groups are of concern. As we look at these threats, we cannot take a myopic view. Each attack from terrorist groups have reemphasized the global reach of terrorist activity.

For instance, there was the crippling cyber attack in November on Sony Pictures Entertainment's network. In December, in Sydney, Australia, we witnessed a terrorist attack on a cafe where, at the end of a 16-hour stand-off, two innocent people laid dead. Then, in January, in Paris, there was a series of execution-style murders of 12 members of Charlie Hebdo's creative team. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has taken credit for this attack.

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It is important that my Republican colleagues act responsibly, stop playing politics, and pass a clean DHS funding bill. Without a fully-funded Department of Homeland Security, some of our key methods of identifying terrorists and preventing terrorist travel will be at risk. Are we really ready to stand before the American people—those who trust and value that we recognize their needs—and declare for the sake of partisanship, we are going to make our Nation more vulnerable by not funding DHS?

Chairman McCaul. I thank the Ranking Member. Other Members are reminded that statements may be submitted for the record.

[The statement of Hon. Jackson Lee follows:]

STATEMENT OF HONORABLE SHEILA JACKSON LEE

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Thompson thank you for holding this morning's hearing on "Countering Violent Islamist Extremism: The Urgent Threat of Foreign Fighters and Home-Grown Terror."

I offer the family and friends of Kayla Mueller my condolences and thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

She is the latest United States citizen to have been killed while being held against their will by ISIS/ISIL.

I welcome and thank today's witnesses, the Honorable Francis X. Taylor, under secretary for intelligence and analysis U.S. Department of Homeland Secretary; the Honorable Nicholas J. Rasmussen, director, National Counterterrorism Center, Office of the Director of National Intelligence; and Mr. Michael B. Steinbach, assistant director, Counterterrorism Division with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

The work of the Department of Homeland Security, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to protect our Nation and its people from radical terrorists and terrorism is critical to homeland security.

The topic of today's hearing is relevant to the reality of a new global terrorism threats posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/the Islamic State (IS)/the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

On February 14, 2014, the testimony of James Clapper, the director of intelligence, before the Senate Armed Services Committee estimated that "somewhere

between 75,000 to possibly 115,00 insurgents were organized into 1,500 groups comprised numbers of persons associated with the ISIS/ISIL terrorism network.”

In 2014, the Bipartisan Policy Center reported that more than 10,000 foreign fighters have gone to Syria where they have access to training, weapons, and hardened terrorist fighters.

The threat is no longer isolated to the region that borders Syria, Iraq, and Turkey, but can be found in nations far from the area of conflict.

In January Belgium police conducted pre-emptive raids against terrorist suspects who were said to have recently returned from fighting with terrorists in the war in Syria.

Belgium police reported that the suspects opened fire on police using military-style weapons.

The attraction by some in the United States to joining the ISIS/ISIL is evident by the FBI arrest of U.S. citizens and residents on charges of providing material support to terrorist groups and using certain weapons in connection with the conflict in Syria.

In 2014, a 20-year-old U.S. citizen and resident of California allegedly traveled to the Canadian border intending to travel to Syria to join ISIL. In March this young man was charged with attempting to provide material support to a foreign terrorist group after he agreed to “connect” an undercover FBI agent to ISIL.

Many of the Members of the Homeland Security Committee are concerned about terrorist travel especially those holding United States or European passports because they can gain ease of access to our shores.

I know that the Department of Homeland Security’s job is to identify foreign fighters who may seek to enter the United States and prevent them from traveling to this country or ensuring another appropriate Government response.

I have introduced H.R. 48, the “No Fly for Foreign Fighters Act,” which requires the director of the Terrorist Screening Center to review the Terrorist Screening Database and the terrorist watch list to determine if an individual boarding a U.S.-bound or domestic flight poses a terrorist threat or is suspected of being a member of a foreign terrorist organization.

It is my believe that the Department of Homeland Security must be able to do its job and that Congress not providing full funding for the agency for fiscal year 2015 is a hindrance to the agency’s mission and our obligations to do all that we can be protect the American public.

Protection of Federal buildings, as well as the workforce and citizens who access them, are also hampered by a failure to provide full-year funding to DHS.

In the wake of high-profile attacks in Paris, Secretary Johnson directed the Federal Protective Services to step up security operations. Without full year funding, those efforts could be hampered.

Because of budget uncertainty the Department of Homeland Security cannot complete a much-needed \$90 million investment in new and upgraded remote and mobile video surveillance systems in the Rio Grande Valley.

These systems are necessary to provide the Border Patrol with increased situational awareness, early detection of border incursions, enhanced identification and classification of threats, and the tracking of suspect materials.

Additionally, the Border Patrol needs Mobile Video Surveillance Systems for day and night surveillance. Moreover, the Department cannot carry out the additional 16,526 flight hours along the Southwest Border to detect illegal border crossings.

For this reason, I ask my colleagues on the committee to join me in asking the leadership of the House to pass a budget to fully fund the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2015—not doing so may make the Nation more vulnerable at a time we should be at our highest level of preparedness.

I thank today’s witnesses and look forward to their testimony.

Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. I am pleased to have three distinguished witnesses before us today to discuss this important topic. First, the honorable Francis Taylor became the under secretary for intelligence and analysis at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in April 2014. He has held a variety of senior-level positions over his 35-year career in Government service. Most recently, Under Secretary Taylor served as the assistant secretary of state for diplomatic security and director of foreign missions. Thank you, sir, for being here today.

Next we have the honorable Nicholas Rasmussen, sworn in as director of the National Counterterrorism Center in December 2014. He previously served as NCTC's deputy director since June 2012. Prior to returning to NCTC, he served with the National Security Council staff as special assistant to the President and senior director for counterterrorism. Thank you, sir.

Last but not least, Michael Steinbach, appointed as the assistant director of the FBI's Counterterrorism Division by Director Comey in July 2014. He joined the FBI in 1995, held a variety of positions at FBI headquarters in the field and overseas during his 10-year career with the bureau, most recently served as deputy assistant director of the Counterterrorism Division.

The witnesses' full statements will appear in the record. The Chairman now recognizes Under Secretary Taylor for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF FRANCIS X. TAYLOR, UNDER SECRETARY, INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY**

Mr. TAYLOR. Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the committee, I am pleased to be here today with my colleagues from the FBI and NCTC to discuss the foreign fighter threat and our current efforts to disrupt terrorist travel.

I would be remiss if I did not highlight one of the biggest threats to the security of our homeland, the lack of funding for the Department of Homeland Security.

Given the myriad of threats facing the homeland, it is imperative that Congress pass a full-year DHS appropriations bill for 2015. As long as the Department operates under a CR, there are a whole series of activities vital to homeland security and public safety that the Department just cannot do. The men and women of DHS need a partner in Congress to fund their efforts. Time is running out, and I urge Congress to pass a full-year appropriations bill for this Department as soon as possible.

The foreign fighter threat continues to be a security threat to the United States and our allies. Events in Australia, Canada, and most recently in France and Belgium underscore that the foreign fighter threat is no longer a problem restricted to foreign conflict zones, such as northern Syria and western Iraq.

At present, we are unaware of any specific, credible, or imminent threat to the homeland. However, recent events have demonstrated the need for increased vigilance, both at home and abroad. That said, the foreign fighter threat is constantly evolving as well as developing new tactics in recruitment that we have not previously seen before.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Levant, commonly referred to as ISIL, exhibits a very sophisticated propaganda capability. ISIL's use of multi-media content has enhanced the appeal of its terrorist organization. This propaganda encourages supporters to carry out attacks, and such attacks could be conducted without specific direction from ISIL with little or no warning.

To address this very threat, counter violence extremism in the homeland, and to guard against the domestic lone offender, Sec-

retary Johnson has directed the DHS to build on our partnerships with our State, local, and local law enforcement partners in ways that enhance its community relationships and builds resilience to violent extremism.

The Secretary recently appointed a CVE coordinator to oversee the various CVE programs and efforts across our Department. Additionally, since September 2014, Secretary Johnson has personally participated in direct engagement efforts with critical stakeholders in Chicago, Columbus, Ohio, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and Boston to discuss how DHS can best support local efforts to counter violent extremism and address the foreign terrorist fighters.

DHS CVE efforts are designed to share information with communities and local officials, to raise vigilance on behavioral indicators that may link to radicalization to violence. The DHS program also focuses on empowering communities and local law enforcement to develop intervention and prevention efforts at the local level.

The White House plans to host a CVE summit on February 18, 2015. It will focus on both domestic and international CVE efforts. Prior to the summit, DHS will host an event for domestic stakeholders on February 17 at the White House, while a second affiliated event, specifically for international partners, will be hosted by the Department of State on February 19.

Let me now turn to the specific efforts DHS is undertaking to identify, address, and minimize the foreign fighter threat to the United States and to our allies. Beginning in July 2014, DHS required enhanced screening at selected overseas airports with direct flights to the United States. Weeks later, DHS added additional airports to this list with the United Kingdom and other countries following similar enhancements to their required aviation security operations.

TSA, as directed by Secretary Johnson is also conducting an immediate short-term review to determine if additional security screening measures are necessary at both domestic, and overseas, last-point-of-departure airports. DHS is also exploring the possibility of expanding PRE—pre-clearance operation at foreign airports with flights to the United States.

Currently, CBP has pre-clearance operations at 15 airports in six countries, and, where appropriate, CBP intends to enter into negotiations to expand air pre-clearance operations at new locations. The Department continues to work closely with our European partners through the U.S.-E.U. Passenger Name Records Agreement to transfer passenger name records information to DHS by airlines that are subject to the E.U. data protection laws.

In addition, DHS uses close partnerships with countries in the Visa Waiver program and the five-country ministerial to improve respective abilities to identify illicit travel. Just this past November, the Secretary increased the data fields that are collected from Visa Waiver countries where visas are not required for entry into the United States, and to provide additional passport data, contact information, and other potential names or aliases in the travel application submitted under the electronic system for travel authorization before they can travel to the United States.

DHS is increasing efforts to track those who enter and leave Syria and may later seek to travel to the United States without a

State Department-issued visa. The terrorist threat is dynamic, and those who operate individually as a part of terrorist organizations will continue to challenge our security measures and our safety.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to end my statement there, and I look forward to the questions from the committee.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Taylor follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF FRANCIS X. TAYLOR

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and distinguished Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today—along with my colleagues from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), and the Department of State (DOS)—to discuss the foreign fighter threat and current efforts to disrupt terrorist travel.

For some time, the U.S. Government, including the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), has been concerned that terrorist groups operating in permissive environments present a significant security threat to the United States and to our allies. Events in Australia, Canada, and, most recently, in France and Belgium underscore that the foreign fighter threat is no longer a problem restricted to foreign conflict zones such as those in northern Syria or western Iraq. The Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other like-minded terrorist organizations have been effective in recruiting fighters from Western countries, as well as recruiting individuals for violent action at home for those who cannot travel to conflict zones. The threat is real, it continues to evolve, and it is a present danger to everyone across the globe. It includes people radicalized to violence overseas, or potentially here in the United States.

At present, we are unaware of any specific, credible, imminent threat to the homeland; however, recent events have demonstrated the need for increased vigilance both at home and abroad. We recognize that the threat environment is ever-evolving and becoming increasingly complex and decentralized. For that reason, DHS is continuing to encourage an informed and aware public, as promoted by the “See something, say something” campaign, as well as our more specific bulletins. We must recognize protecting the homeland is a shared responsibility.

In my testimony today, I will discuss the foreign fighter threat and highlight specific efforts DHS is undertaking to identify, address, and minimize the foreign fighter threat to the United States and to our allies.

FOREIGN FIGHTER THREAT

While much of today’s hearing will focus on terrorist threats from Syria and Iraq, it is important to emphasize that the terrorist threat is fluid and not constrained to one group, race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, or geographic location. Many terrorist groups continue to pose a risk to our security and safety.

Core al-Qaeda (AQ), al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and AQ’s affiliates and adherents remain a major concern for DHS. Despite the deaths of many of AQ’s senior leaders, the group maintains the intent, and in some cases, the capability to facilitate and conduct attacks against U.S. citizens and facilities. The group has also demonstrated that it is capable of adjusting its tactics, techniques, and procedures for targeting the West.

Events in recent weeks have also made it clear why DHS and others in the counterterrorism and law enforcement communities are concerned about the threats posed by terrorists operating out of Syria and Iraq. In addition to hard-core al-Qaeda loyalists, a number of those involved in terrorist operations within Syria and Iraq are affiliated with ISIL. ISIL operates as if it were a military organization and aspires to overthrow governments in the region and eventually beyond. Their experience and successes on the battlefields in Syria and Iraq have armed this group with advanced capabilities that most terrorist groups do not have.

ISIL has also publicly threatened “direct confrontation” with the United States, which is consistent with the group’s media releases during the past several years that have alluded to attacking the United States. Through their sophisticated messaging capability, which includes the dissemination of high-quality media content on multiple on-line platforms, ISIL has been able to quickly reach a global audience and encourage acts of violence, as well as inspire U.S. citizens to travel to Syria to join in the conflict.

The on-going conflict in Syria has emerged as a draw for more than 19,000 foreign fighters. We are aware of a number of U.S. Persons who have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria. More than 150 U.S. Persons and at least 3,400 Westerners have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria to participate in the conflict. We have also noted that veteran al-Qaeda fighters have travelled from Pakistan to Syria to take advantage of the permissive operating environment and easy access to foreign fighters. We remain concerned about the threat of foreign fighters from the United States or elsewhere who may go to Syria and Iraq, become more radicalized to violence, and return to the United States or their home country and conduct attacks on their own or in concert with others. Furthermore, we also are concerned that U.S. Persons who join violent extremist groups in Syria could gain combat skills, violent extremist connections, and possibly become persuaded to conduct organized or “lone-wolf” style attacks that target U.S. and Western interests. We also have become increasingly aware of the possibility that Syria could emerge as a base of operations for al-Qaeda’s international agenda, which could include attacks against the homeland.

#### DHS RESPONSE TO THE FOREIGN FIGHTER THREAT

##### *Aviation Security*

Terrorist organizations like AQAP continue to pose a serious threat to international civil aviation. As we have seen in AQAP’s three attempted aviation attacks against the homeland—the airliner plot of December 2009, an attempted attack against U.S.-bound cargo planes in October 2010, and an airliner plot in May 2012—terrorist groups have shown a significant and growing sophistication in terms of bomb design and construction, operational skill, and innovation. In the past 3 years terrorists have become increasingly interested in circumventing airport security screening through the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) concealed in cargo, commercial electronics, physical areas of one’s body, in shoes or clothing, and in cosmetics and liquids.

To address the terrorist threat to aviation, DHS continues to evaluate, modify, and enhance aviation security measures. For example, beginning in July 2014, DHS required enhanced screening at select overseas airports with direct flights to the United States. Weeks later, DHS added additional airports to the list, with the United Kingdom and other countries following with similar enhancements to their required aviation security operations. Following recent world events, in January 2015, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) took steps to enhance the number of random searches of passengers and carry-on luggage boarding aircraft at U.S. airports. TSA, as directed by Secretary Johnson, is also conducting an immediate, short-term review to determine if additional security measures are necessary at both domestic and overseas last-point-of-departure airports. DHS will continue to evaluate the implementation of aviation security measures with air carriers and foreign airports to determine if more is necessary, and will make the appropriate aviation security adjustments without unduly burdening the traveling public.

In the long term, DHS is exploring the possibility of expanding pre-clearance operations at foreign airports with flights to the United States. This initiative provides for customs, immigration, and agriculture inspections of international air passengers and their goods by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials before the individual boards the plane for travel to the United States. Currently, CBP has pre-clearance operations at 15 airports and in 6 countries and, if appropriate, intends to enter into negotiations in order to expand air pre-clearance operations to new locations.

##### *Information Sharing*

Information sharing with our domestic and foreign partners is vital in identifying developing threats both here and abroad. DHS is committed to continuing our efforts, along with our colleagues in the intelligence community, to partner with European governments and other key counterterrorism allies to share information about terrorist threats.

Since its inception, DHS has sought to broaden and deepen international liaison efforts to improve its ability to share information with key foreign allies. DHS has worked closely with the European Union through the U.S.-E.U. Passenger Name Records Agreement to facilitate the transfer of Passenger Name Records information to DHS by airlines that are subject to E.U. data protection laws. This agreement provides the highest standard of security and privacy protection. In addition, DHS has used its close partnerships with the countries in the Visa Waiver program and the Five Country Conference to improve our respective abilities to identify illicit travel. The Preventing and Combating Serious Crime Agreement that DHS and 40

foreign partners have signed provides each signatory with reciprocal access to fingerprint repositories for the purposes of combating crime and terrorism. With the Five Country Conference, which includes Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom, we have also concluded immigration information-sharing agreements that reduce the likelihood that a person applying for asylum or a visa in any of the five countries who has an illicit past could hide that history. DHS also engages with foreign partners to share analytic and targeting methodology, chiefly by conducting analytic exchanges, to enhance the ability of DHS and foreign allies to identify individuals and travel routes, and prevent travel to foreign conflict zones.

DHS is working with our interagency partners to inform our State, local, Tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners of recent events and threats. Following the Paris attacks, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) prepared two Intelligence Notes and worked with the FBI to prepare and issue Joint Information Bulletins (JIBs); DHS shared both items Nationally with fusion centers.

I&A continues to provide our State and local law enforcement partners with information about observable behavioral indicators of U.S. Persons planning or attempting travel to Syria. I&A has produced tailored assessments on the motivations of U.S. travelers, their travel patterns, the role social media is playing in radicalization to violence, and the ways in which U.S. Persons are providing material support to Syria-based violent extremist groups. Additionally, I&A has partnered with the FBI to produce JIBs and other products for State and local law enforcement on the trends and observable behaviors in individuals seeking to travel to Syria.

#### *Tracking Foreign Fighters*

DHS is increasing efforts to track those who enter and leave Syria and may later seek to travel to the United States without a State Department-issued visa under the Visa Waiver program (VWP). Working with the intelligence community, DHS is aware that a number of foreign fighters in Syria have come from various VWP countries.

In response, this fall, DHS strengthened the security of the VWP through enhancements to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). Those changes went into effect on November 3, 2014. ESTA adds a significant layer of security to the VWP by enabling CBP to conduct security vetting of prospective VWP travelers to determine if they pose a law enforcement or security risk before they board aircraft destined for the United States. DHS determined that additional data will improve the Department's ability to screen prospective VWP travelers and more accurately and effectively identify those who pose a security risk to the United States. These improvements provide an additional layer of enduring security for the VWP and facilitate visa-free travel to the United States.

Because we view advance passenger screening as a critical element to an effective National counterterrorism capability, we have explained to many partner nations how they can compare airline manifests and reservation data against terrorist watch lists and other intelligence about terrorist travel. This is an area where the United States has developed a capability significantly more advanced than most other nations, both in identifying illicit travel and in protecting the privacy and civil liberties of all travelers, and we have worked to share this know-how in order to prevent terrorists from traveling the globe in anonymity. Developing this capability is also consistent with the new obligations introduced through U.N. Security Council Resolution 2178, introduced last year by President Obama.

DHS is also working with partner nations in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa to increase our information sharing to track Syrian foreign fighters. These efforts allow the United States greater visibility on potential threats to the homeland, while similarly enhancing our partners' ability to track and prevent terrorist travel. The importance of this issue was highlighted by the United Nations Security Council's adoption of Resolution 2178 in September 2014, which provided new momentum for European and other governments to use air passenger screening technology and enhance information sharing through multi-lateral and bi-lateral channels.

#### *Countering Violent Extremism*

Home-grown violent extremists (HVEs) represent a persistent and often unpredictable threat based on their close familiarity with the United States and their ability to act with little or no warning as lone offenders or in small decentralized cells. Over the past few years we have seen self-mobilizing, independently operating HVEs plot to bomb high-profile targets, such as the Federal Reserve Bank in New York, the U.S. Capitol, and commercial establishments in downtown Chicago, Tampa, and Oakland. All these plots were disrupted.

To address the need to counter violent extremism (CVE) in the homeland and to guard against the domestic “lone wolf”—someone who did not train at a terrorist camp or join the ranks of a terrorist organization overseas, but is inspired here at home by a group’s social media, literature, or violent extremist ideology—Secretary Johnson has directed DHS to build on our partnerships with State and local law enforcement in a way that enhances community relationships and builds resilience to violent extremist recruitment. DHS now has a senior executive whose sole responsibility is coordinating and improving the Department’s CVE efforts.

DHS’s approach emphasizes the strength of local communities and the premise that well-informed and well-equipped families, communities, and front-line personnel represent the best defense against violent extremism. Over the past 8 months, DHS has participated in a National Security Council (NSC)-coordinated interagency effort to work with Boston, Los Angeles, and Minneapolis/St. Paul to facilitate and support the development of locally-based, and -driven, violent extremism prevention and intervention pilot frameworks. Additionally, since September 2014, Secretary Johnson has personally participated in direct engagement efforts with critical stakeholders in Chicago, Columbus, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, and most recently, Boston, to hear how DHS can best support local efforts to counter violent extremism and address foreign terrorist fighters.

DHS CVE efforts, in partnership with NCTC, also include the development of the Community Awareness Briefing (CAB), which is designed to share Unclassified information with stakeholders regarding the threat of violent extremism, as well as help communities and law enforcement develop the necessary understanding of al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, ISIL, and related affiliates’ recruitment tactics as well as explore ways to address these threats at the local level. The CAB draws a parallel between the similar recruitment targets of all types of violent extremism. For example, the CAB uses the case study on the attack at a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, WI to illustrate potential for violence from all types of violent extremists, including but not limited to violent white supremacists, violent eco-terrorists, violent Neo-Nazis, criminal gangs (such as MS-13), and international terrorist groups. Due to the increased number of Western-based fighters traveling to foreign war conflicts, such as Syria and Somalia, the CAB now includes information relating to the foreign terrorist fighter recruitment narrative by al-Shabaab and ISIL.

Beyond our borders, DHS collaborates with partner countries (such as the United Kingdom, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Spain, and France) to develop best practices in community engagement endeavors that effectively counter violent extremism. Following the Paris attacks, DHS worked with some of these countries and the Department of State to link members of civil society and community stakeholders in respective countries so that they could coordinate and build grass-roots responses to the attacks in Paris.

DHS is also working closely with the NSC staff, the Department of State, the Department of Justice including the FBI, and NCTC to plan the February 18–19, 2015, CVE Summit which will bring together key stakeholders from National and local governments around the world as well as the private sector, civil society, and community leaders to develop an action agenda address violent extremism in all its forms. Furthermore, DHS is working with the Department of State on the Global Counterterrorism Forum Workshop, which will be held on February 23 and 24 in Washington, DC and will build on the CVE Summit. This workshop will focus on ways in which communities and governments can develop specific programs and efforts to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. France, Canada, Australia, and others will address the recent attacks they have faced and solutions they are developing to deal with this threat.

#### CONCLUSION

The terrorist threat is dynamic, as those who operate individually or as part of a terrorist organization will continue to challenge our security measures and our safety. DHS will continue to work with our international counterparts and our colleagues within the FBI, NCTC, Department of State, and the intelligence community, to identify potential threats to our security, both at home and abroad.

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

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the Secretary. Excuse me. The Chairman now recognizes Director Rasmussen for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF NICHOLAS J. RASMUSSEN, DIRECTOR, NATIONAL COUNTERTERRORISM CENTER, OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE**

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Thank you, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson and Members of the committee. I really do appreciate the opportunity to be here today to discuss the threat posed by foreign fighters and home-grown terror and our efforts as a Government to counter it.

As Frank Taylor said, I am also pleased to join my colleagues and close partners from Homeland Security and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. We work closely and cooperatively every day as a part of a true community of counterterrorism professionals, and I am really grateful for that partnership that we share.

This morning, I will briefly describe the threat we face from foreign fighters, highlight the role that extremist use of social media has played in that process, and conclude with efforts NCTC and our partners across the Federal Government are taking to counter that threat. I will begin with the foreign fighter picture.

As you know, one of the most pressing concerns for the intelligence community is the on-going flow of foreign fighters to Syria, and importantly, the threat they could pose upon return to their home country of home origin. The battlefields in Iraq and Syria clearly provide foreign fighters with combat experience, with training in weapons and explosives, and with access to terror networks that may be ultimately planning targets—attacks which target the West.

The rate of foreign fighter travel that we have seen in recent years is unprecedented. It exceeds the rate of travel and travelers who went to Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia, other prominent conflict zones, but it exceeds the rate of travel to those conflict zones that we have seen at any point in the last 20 years.

The United States and our allies are increasingly concerned with the more than 20,000 foreign fighters we assess have traveled to Syria from over 90 different countries of origin. We assess that at least 3,400 of these fighters are from Western countries, and that number includes also over 150 U.S. persons who have either traveled to the conflict zone, or attempted to do so. That is something we can speak about in more detail later in the session.

I want to be cautious here about that because it is very difficult to be precise with these numbers, because they come from a wide variety of sources that vary in quality. I would rather focus on the trend lines, which are clear, and which are concerning.

In addition to the foreign fighters who have already traveled, it is clear that the number of those seeking to go to Iraq and Syria is going up. Furthermore, the majority of those who are getting there, getting to the conflict zone right now, are fighting, or looking to fight for ISIL on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq.

It is also a complicating factor that the individuals drawn to fight in foreign conflict zones do not fit any one stereotype or profile. They come from various backgrounds, which highlights the need for comprehensive messaging strategies and early engagement with a variety of communities in order to dissuade vulnerable individuals from trying to travel to conflict zones. The volume and

diversity of recruits flowing to and from the conflict makes disruption particularly challenging.

There is no single pipeline for foreign fighter travel into and out of Syria. Violent extremists take different routes, including land, air, and sea. Most routes do involve transit through Turkey because of its geographic proximity to the Syrian border areas where most of these groups operate.

Now this sense of shared threat has prompted even closer cooperation across U.S. Federal agencies, and importantly, with our international partners, particularly in Europe. This is resulting in the development of stricter counterterrorism laws overseas, increased efforts at border security among our European partners, and importantly, more willingness to share threat information among partner nations.

While these good efforts are under way and are making progress, significant work remains, particularly in ensuring that our foreign partners are able and willing to identify and stop foreign fighters when they transit their borders, both to prevent those fighters from entering, and then to stop fighters from leaving their home countries to travel abroad.

Now, I will turn quickly to the use of social media by extremists, and especially by ISIL, and the way in which this group uses social media to attract a diverse set of aspiring foreign fighters.

Now, the Chairman and the Ranking Member both mentioned in their opening remarks the brutal behavior that we have seen of ISIL in recent weeks. The world witnessed the brutal burning of a Jordanian pilot held hostage by the group, and we have seen the cruel beheadings of U.S. and Japanese hostages.

ISIL's media capabilities are robust and effective. Moreover, their ability to generate timely propaganda continues to grow. I would argue that ISIL has proven far more adept than core al-Qaeda ever was, or more adept than any of—core—of al-Qaeda's affiliate groups, more adept at using these new social media tools to reach a broader audience.

Just since January 1 of this year, more than 250 official ISIL products have been published on-line, and the group has shown the capacity to use these products to speak to a full spectrum of potential audiences. Local Sunni Arab populations inside Iraq and Syria, who they are trying to co-opt and exercise dominion over, individuals in coalition countries, and even populations around the world, including English-speaking audiences here and across the globe.

As you would expect, ISIL uses the most popular of social media platforms to disseminate this messaging. YouTube, Facebook, Twitter. They know how to ensure that once their media releases are posted, that they reach far and wide almost instantaneously with reposting, and regeneration of follow-on links and translations into an ever-growing number of additional languages.

Now, in terms of content, we have all seen that it includes these horrible, horrific images in which hostages have been murdered or ISIL's adversaries on the battlefield have been executed in summary fashion. But we have also seen social media images of a bucolic family-friendly welcoming light under ISIL's rule in their self-declared caliphate as ISIL tries to paint a picture to entice disenfranchised individuals seeking ideological, religious, or per-

sonal fulfillment, and not just a battlefield or a martyrdom experience.

ISIL also generates releases that cater to a younger population very familiar with popular culture. These releases often reference Western branding, including popular video games, in an attempt to appeal to thrill seekers and youth looking for fulfillment.

Now, the threat we face is not just from foreign fighters or terrorist groups including ISIL and al-Qaeda. Individuals inspired by these and other groups, or simply by violent, extremist propaganda can be motivated to action, and, as Frank said, that can come with little or no warning.

Many of these so-called home-grown violent extremists are lone actors who can potentially operate undetected and who can plan and execute a simple attack without providing us warning. As a community, we closely monitor violent extremist activity, including when that activity appears and occurs in the United States, and we are looking for signs that last year's attacks in Canada and elsewhere may embolden other HBEs to conduct additional attacks.

We believe ISIL's rhetoric may have played a role in these attacks, particularly in target selection in terms of targeting Government officials or military personnel. We are working with our partners across multiple disciplines in the community to increase our knowledge of foreign fighters and to counter extremism.

NCTC has taken a broad center-wide effort to track foreign fighters traveling to Syria. We work in the first instance to resolve the specific identities of these potential fighters to uncover any potential derogatory information that we have in intelligence community holdings.

We are also working closely with foreign partners to combat threats emanating from Syria. We are looking hard to develop investigative leads for our partner agencies to pursue, including identifying foreign fighters entering Syria, who may have potential access or connections to individuals in the homeland so that they can be watch-listed.

The growing number of individuals going abroad as foreign fighters only emphasizes the importance of prevention. Any hope of enduring security or defeating organizations like ISIL rests in our ability to diminish their appeal and to dissuade individuals from joining them in the first place. To this end, we continue to refine and expand the preventive side of terrorism and counterterrorism.

We have seen a steady proliferation of more pro-active and more engaged community awareness efforts across the United States with the goal of giving communities information and tools they need to identify extremism in their midst, and to do something about it before it manifests in violence.

My organization, NCTC, in direct and daily collaboration with DHS, the Justice Department, and FBI, has led the creation of CVE tools to build community resilience across the country. In working closely with these partners, we are doing this work all across the country, and I would like to point to just one quick example.

You will recall the case last year in which three young teenage girls allegedly attempted to travel from Denver to Syria by way of Frankfurt, Germany, where their travel was disrupted by law en-

forcement. Now, in the aftermath of that incident, we, working together with DHS—DHS, FBI, and the Department of Justice—sent our officers on multiple occasions to meet and talk to the greater Denver community to raise awareness among community and law enforcement partners about the terrorist recruitment threat.

We developed a briefing, working with our partners, that is now tailored to address the specific effort to identify and recruit foreign fighters for Syria and Iraq. We have received a very strong demand signal for more such outreach from communities like Denver, and we continue to try to expand our toolkit of CVE-related tools.

With our DHS colleagues, we have created and we regularly deliver a community resilience exercise program, a table-top exercise that brings together law enforcement with community leaders to run through a hypothetical scenario and talk about response.

We realize we can't institutionalize a prevention approach without scaling up these efforts, and that goes to something you said in your opening statement, Chairman McCaul. So we are working as a community to try to create more programs to train individuals on CVE tools to ensure that communities across the country are able to lead CVE approaches locally in their own communities. This approach syncs up nicely with the efforts of the White House, NCTC, DHS, DOJ, and FBI to facilitate the local development and implementation of intervention frameworks in cities all across the country.

I will stop there, Mr. Chairman—

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

Mr. RASMUSSEN [continuing]. Mr. Ranking Member. Thank you. [The prepared statement of Mr. Rasmussen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NICHOLAS J. RASMUSSEN

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Thank you Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee. I appreciate this opportunity to be here today to discuss the threat posed by foreign fighters and home-grown terror, and our efforts to counter it. I'm pleased to join my colleagues and close partners from the Department of Homeland Security and Federal Bureau of Investigation.

FOREIGN FIGHTERS

One of the most pressing concerns for the intelligence community is the on-going flow of foreign fighters to Syria and the threat they could pose upon return to their home countries. The battlefields in Iraq and Syria provide foreign fighters with combat experience, weapons and explosives training, and access to terrorist networks that may be planning attacks which target the West.

This shared threat has prompted even closer cooperation across U.S. Federal agencies and with our international partners, particularly in Europe. We are seeing increased international focus on this problem which is resulting in stricter counter-terrorism laws overseas, increased border security efforts, and more willingness to share threat information among partner nations.

The United States and our allies are increasingly concerned with the more than 20,000 foreign fighters who have traveled to Syria from over 90 different countries. We assess at least 3,400 of these fighters are from Western countries including over 150 U.S. persons who have either traveled to the conflict zone, or attempted to do so. It's very difficult to be precise with these numbers because they come from a variety of sources that vary in quality. But the trend lines are clear and concerning. The rate of foreign fighter travel to Syria is unprecedented. It exceeds the rate of travelers who went to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Iraq, Yemen, or Somalia at any point in the last 20 years.

In addition to the foreign fighters who have already traveled, the number of those seeking to go to Syria and Iraq are going up. Furthermore, the majority of those getting there right now are fighting for ISIL on the battlefield in Syria and Iraq.

Individuals drawn to fight in foreign conflict zones do not fit any one stereotype. Recruits come from various backgrounds, highlighting the need for comprehensive messaging and early engagement with a variety of communities to dissuade vulnerable individuals from traveling. Extremist use of social media, especially by ISIL, is attracting a diverse set of aspiring foreign fighters and serving as a platform for relaying travel advice, including facilitation information, meeting locations, and even regional hotel accommodations.

#### ISIL'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Last week, the world witnessed the brutal burning of Jordanian pilot Lieutenant Muath al-Kaseasbeh. As that propaganda video demonstrated, ISIL's media capabilities are robust and effective. Moreover, their ability to generate timely new propaganda continues to grow. Since January 1 of this year, more than 250 official ISIL products have been published on-line. The group has shown the capacity to use these products to speak to the full spectrum of potential audiences: Local Sunni Arab populations whom they are trying to co-opt and exercise dominion over, coalition countries, and populations around the world—including English-speaking audiences here and across the globe.

As you would expect, ISIL uses the most popular social media platforms to disseminate this messaging—YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter. They know how to ensure that once their media releases are posted, that they reach wide and far almost instantaneously, with re-posting and generation of follow-on links and translations into additional languages.

In terms of content, we've all seen that it includes those horrible images in which hostages have been murdered or ISIL's adversaries on the battlefield have been executed.

But we've also seen the social media images of a bucolic, family-friendly, welcoming life under ISIL's rule in their self-declared caliphate, as ISIL tries to paint a picture to entice disenfranchised individuals seeking ideological, religious, and personal fulfillment, not just a battlefield or martyrdom experience.

ISIL also generates releases that cater to a younger population more familiar with popular culture. These releases often reference Western brands—including popular video games—to appeal to thrill seekers and youth looking for fulfillment. They have also coined pithy "memes" such as, "YODO: You Only Die Once. Why not make it martyrdom?"

ISIL supporters have also enhanced the group's presence on the internet, expressing their alliance in various languages—in countries from Belgium to the Philippines—in their "We are ISIL" campaign.

In short, ISIL has proven far more adept than core al-Qaeda—or any of al-Qaeda's affiliates—at using new media tools to reach a broader audience.

#### FOREIGN FIGHTER TRAVEL

How do we disrupt travel by foreign fighters to conflict zones, Syria in particular? The volume and diversity of recruits flowing to and from the conflict areas make disruption especially challenging. There is no single pipeline for foreign fighter travel into and out of Syria. Violent extremists take different routes, including land, air, and sea. Most routes involve transit through Turkey because of its geographic proximity to the Syrian border areas where violent extremist groups operate. Turkey has signed visa-free travel agreements with more than 69 governments, which limit the requirement for traveler screening. No visas are required for most E.U. citizens, some of whom are also able to travel on identity cards. Many would-be fighters simply take direct or indirect commercial flights to Turkish airports. Some European fighters also travel overland via the Balkans. Violent extremists from the Caucasus transit Iran, Russia, or Georgia en route to Turkey. Other extremists, including those from Europe or North Africa, use maritime routes by boarding cruise ships or ferries to Turkey before crossing into Syria.

Recently, Turkey has stepped up its efforts to deny entry to potential foreign fighters based on information provided by the fighters' countries of origin. The "Turkish Banned from Entry List" now reportedly includes 10,000 individuals.

In response to the recent attacks in Paris and arrests in several European countries of violent extremists planning terrorist attacks, we see an increased political willingness among our foreign partners to review and enhance border controls and institute stronger watchlisting and information-sharing arrangements. In fact, tomorrow, the European Union is holding a summit on foreign fighter issues, and we

hope to see additional border security and information-sharing initiatives as a result of this meeting. Additionally, the summit will most likely address counterterrorism legal mechanisms in the European Union and a discussion of terrorist use of the internet, all worthwhile and meaningful steps to greater cooperation in Europe.

Our partners in North Africa and Asia are also passing new counterterrorism laws and identifying other means to identify, interdict, and prosecute foreign fighters and those who support them. Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Turkey, and the UAE have all recently enacted legislation or regulations to address the foreign fighter issue.

While good efforts are underway, significant work remains, particularly in ensuring that our foreign partners are able and willing to identify and stop foreign fighters at their borders—both to prevent fighters from entering and to stop fighters from leaving their home countries to travel abroad. These efforts must include a range of measures, including screening visa applicants; using Passenger Name Records or other data to identify potential foreign fighters; applying increased screening measures at points of departure; and a willingness to share information through INTERPOL, the United Nations, and bilateral relationships.

#### NCTC EFFORTS TO ADDRESS FOREIGN FIGHTER THREAT

NCTC is undertaking a broad Center-wide effort to track foreign fighters traveling to Syria, working closely with our intelligence community partners. We work to resolve the identities of potential fighters to uncover possible derogatory information in NCTC holdings. Additionally, the U.S. Government continues to work closely with foreign partners to combat threats emanating from Syria.

As part of this effort, NCTC aggregates information on known or suspected terrorists traveling to Syria in the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE). TIDE is the U.S. Government's central repository for terrorist identity intelligence. It is also an analytic tool, and this effort has created a valuable forum for identifying, tracking, and sharing information with law enforcement, counterterrorism, screening, and watchlisting communities on known or suspected terrorists.

Our metrics-based tracking and assessment of these terrorist identities has directly helped resolve inconclusive identities, enhance TIDE records, and upgrade watch list statuses on several hundred known or suspected terrorists.

NCTC's Pursuit Group—which develops investigative leads for our partner agencies to pursue—is working to identify foreign fighters entering Syria who have potential access or connections to the homeland, so they can be watchlisted. This analysis leverages NCTC's unique accesses: A wider range of IC and law enforcement information than any other agency through our own counterterrorism data holdings as well as natively through embedded officers from ten other agencies.

#### HOME-GROWN VIOLENT EXTREMISM

The threat we face is not just from foreign fighters or terrorist groups including ISIL and al-Qaeda. Individuals inspired by those and other groups, or simply by violent extremist propaganda, can be motivated to action, with little to no warning. Many of these so-called home-grown violent extremists (HVEs) are lone actors, who can potentially operate undetected and plan and execute a simple attack.

We closely monitor violent extremist activity, including when such activity occurs in the United States, for signs that last year's attacks in Canada and New York may embolden other HVEs to conduct additional attacks. ISIL's rhetoric may have played a role in those attacks, particularly in target selection.

More broadly, we believe the HVE threat will remain at its current level resulting in fewer than 10 uncoordinated and unsophisticated plots annually from a pool of up to a few hundred individuals, most of whom are known to the IC and law enforcement.

#### COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM (CVE)

The growing number of individuals going abroad as foreign fighters to Syria only emphasizes the importance of prevention. Any hope of enduring security against terrorism or defeating organizations like ISIL rests in our ability to diminish the appeal of terrorism and dissuade individuals from joining them in the first place.

To this end, we continue to refine and expand the preventive side of counterterrorism. We have seen a steady proliferation of more proactive and engaged community awareness efforts across the United States, with the goal of giving communities the information and the tools they need to identify extremism in their midst and do something about it before it manifests itself in violence. NCTC, in direct collaboration with DHS, DOJ, and FBI, has led the creation of CVE tools to build community resilience across the country.

Working closely with these partners, NCTC is engaged in this work all across the country, and I will point to just one example.

You will recall the case last year in which three young teenage girls allegedly attempted to travel from Denver to Syria by way of Frankfurt, Germany, where their travel was disrupted.

In the aftermath of that incident, we, in concert with DOJ, DHS, and FBI, sent our officers on multiple occasions to meet with the greater Denver community and to raise awareness among community and law enforcement audiences about the terrorist recruitment threat. The briefing, developed with our partners, is now tailored to address the specific issue of foreign fighter recruitment in Syria and Iraq. We and our partner agencies have received a strong demand signal for more such outreach.

This isn't a law enforcement-oriented effort that might be perceived as intimidating. Rather, it's an effort to share information about how members of our communities are being targeted and recruited to join terrorists overseas. Seen in that light, we've had a remarkably positive reaction from the communities with whom we have engaged.

We continue to expand our CVE tools. With our DHS colleagues, we have created and regularly deliver the Community Resilience Exercise program, a table-top exercise that brings together local law enforcement with community leadership in a city to run through a hypothetical scenario featuring a possible violent extremist or foreign fighter. We were pleased that House Homeland staff was able to attend a recent exercise in Minneapolis.

We realize we cannot institutionalize a prevention approach without scaling up these efforts. Our agency is creating programs to train individuals on CVE tools to ensure that communities across the country are able to lead on CVE approaches locally. This approach syncs with the efforts of the White House, NCTC, DHS, DOJ, and FBI to facilitate the local development and implementation of prevention and intervention frameworks in cities across the country.

#### CONCLUSION

Confronting the threat of foreign fighters and working with resolve to prevent another terrorist attack remains the counterterrorism community's overriding mission. NCTC recently celebrated its 10th year in service to the Nation, and we remain focused on continuing to enhance our ability to counter the terrorist threat in the years ahead.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman MCCAUL. We just have many Members here to ask questions, and there will be plenty of time to talk about that, but we appreciate you being here today. Thank you, Director.

Chairman now recognizes Assistant Director Steinbach for his opening statement.

#### **STATEMENT OF MICHAEL B. STEINBACH, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, COUNTERTERRORISM DIVISION, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

Mr. STEINBACH. Good morning, Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the dynamic threat of foreign fighters traveling in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, commonly known as ISIL, and the continued threat to the United States posed by home-grown violent extremists.

These threats remain among the highest priorities for the FBI and the intelligence community as a whole. However, it is a blending of the home-grown violent extremism with foreign fighter ideology which is today's latest adaptation of the threat.

Conflicts in Syria and Iraq are currently the most attractive overseas theaters for Western-based extremists who want to engage in violence. We estimate upwards of 150 Americans have trav-

eled or attempted to travel to Syria to join extremist groups. While this number is small in comparison to the number of European travelers, we must also consider the influence groups like ISIL have on individuals located in the United States who are inspired to commit acts of violence. It is this influence which I refer to as the blended threat.

ISIL has proven ruthless in its campaign, in its violent campaign to rule, and has become yet the latest terror group attracting like-minded Western extremists. Yet from a homeland perspective, it is ISIL's wide-spread reach through the internet and social media which is the most concerning, as ISIL has proven dangerously competent like no other group before it at employing such tools in furtherance of its nefarious strategy.

ISIL uses high-quality traditional media platforms, as well as a multitude of social media campaigns to propagate its extremist ideas. Like al-Qaeda and other foreign terrorist organizations, ISIL has effectively used the internet to communicate, to both radicalize and recruit. Unlike other groups, ISIL has gone one step further and demonstrates an effectiveness to spot and assess potential recruits.

Social media in particular has provided ISIL with the technical platform for wide-spread recruitment, operational direction, and consequently has helped bridge the gap between foreign fighters and home-grown extremists. As a communication tool the internet remains a critical mode for terror groups to exploit.

One recent example just occurred this past week. A group of five individuals was arrested for knowingly and willingly conspiring and attempting to provide material support and resources to a designated foreign terrorist organizations active in Syria and Iraq. Much of their conspiracy occurred via the internet.

Following on other groups' doctrines, ISIL, too, has advocated for lone-wolf attacks. Last month, ISIL released a video via social media reiterating the group's encouragement of lone-wolf offender attacks in Western countries, specifically advocating for attacks against soldiers, law enforcement, and intelligence members.

Several incidents have occurred in the United States and Europe over the past few months which indicate this call to arms has resonated amongst ISIL, supporters and sympathizers. In one case, an Ohio-based man was arrested in January after he obtained a weapon and stated his intent to conduct an attack on the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC, as was mentioned here earlier. Using a Twitter account, the individual posted statements, video, and other content indicating his support for ISIL, and he planned his attack based on his voiced support.

Likewise, recent events in Australia, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom reflect the power of this radicalized message and reemphasize our need to remain vigilant in the homeland, since these small-scale attacks are just as feasible within the United States.

We should also understand community and world events, as viewed through the eyes of the committed individual, may trigger action. As we have seen with highly-publicized events such as the attack on military personnel at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Canada and the hostage situation at the cafe in Australia, these

acts of terror will attract media attention—international media attention and may inspire copy-cat attacks.

ISIL, however, is not the only high-profile terrorist organization of concern. Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, AQAP, poses an ongoing threat to the homeland and U.S. interests abroad. AQAP's on-line magazine, *Inspire*, advocates for lone wolves to conduct attacks against the homeland and Western targets by utilizing simple and inexpensive tactics and methods. On December 24, 2014, AQAP released the 13th edition of the magazine, which provides instructions for building and deploying an IED.

Lastly, social media has allowed groups such as ISIL to use the internet even more effectively at spotting and assessing potential recruits. With the wide-spread horizontal distribution of social media, terrorists can identify sympathetic individuals of all ages in the United States, spot, assess, recruit, and radicalize either to travel or conduct a homeland attack.

The foreign terrorist now has direct access into the United States like never before. As a result, it is imperative that the FBI and all law enforcement organizations understand the latest communication tools and are equipped to identify and prevent terror attacks in the homeland.

We live in a technologically-driven society, and just as private industry has adapted to modern forms of communication, so have the terrorists. Unfortunately, changing forms of communication on the internet and through social media are quickly outpacing laws and technology designed to allow for the lawful intercept of communication content. This real and growing gap the FBI refers to as “going dark” must be urgently addressed as the risks associated with going dark are grave both in traditional criminal matters, as well as National security matters.

We must continue to build partnerships and work with internet providers and social media companies to ensure appropriate, lawful collection is possible. Most companies are not required by statute to development lawful intercept capabilities for law enforcement. As a result, services are developed and deployed without any ability for law enforcement to collect. The FBI, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, is utilizing all investigative techniques and methods to combat the threat these individuals pose to the United States. In conjunction with our domestic and foreign partners, we rigorously collect and analyze intelligence as it pertains to on-going threats posed by ISIL, AQAP, and other foreign terrorist organizations.

In partnership with our many Federal, State, and local agencies assigned to the Joint Terrorism Task Forces around the country, we remain vigilant to ensure the safety of the American public. Be assured the FBI continues to pursue increased efficiencies and information-sharing processes to stay ahead of the threat to the homeland.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and committee Members, I thank you for this opportunity to testify concerning the foreign fighter threat and home-grown violent extremist threat posed to the homeland. I am happy to answer any questions at this time.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Steinbach follows:]

## PREPARED STATEMENT OF MICHAEL B. STEINBACH

FEBRUARY 11, 2015

Good morning Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and Members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the dynamic threat of foreign fighters traveling in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the rising threat to the United States from home-grown violent extremism. This threat remains one of the biggest priorities not only for the FBI but for the intelligence community (IC) as a whole and our foreign partners.

Conflicts in Syria and Iraq are currently the most attractive overseas theater for Western-based extremists who want to engage in violence. We estimate upwards of 150 Americans have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria to join extremist groups. However, once in Syria, it is very difficult to discern what happens there. This lack of clarity remains troubling to the IC.

ISIL has proven to be relentless and continues to terrorize individuals in Syria and Iraq, including Westerners. We are concerned about the possibility of home-grown extremists becoming radicalized by information available on the internet. ISIL utilizes high-quality, traditional media platforms, as well as wide-spread social media campaigns, to propagate its extremist ideas. The group's ability to produce visually appealing messaging coupled with the rampant use of social media by ISIL supporters exhibits the diverse propaganda capabilities. Combined, these tactics result in sophisticated propaganda which may continue to inspire individuals in the homeland to travel to fight overseas. Recent propaganda releases include multiple issues of English language publications, including a complete English magazine. Several videos of ISIL-held hostages and videos sensationalizing ISIL members have also been released.

The threat to American interests overseas is most acute in Iraq, but extends throughout the Middle East region and to the West. There is little doubt that ISIL views the United States and the West as a strategic enemy. A year ago, the leader of ISIL warned the United States will soon be in direct conflict with the group. In January 2015, ISIL released a video via social media networking sites reiterating the group's encouragement of lone-offender attacks in Western countries; specifically advocating for attacks against soldiers, patrons, law enforcement, and intelligence members. Several incidents have occurred in the United States and Europe over the last few months that indicate this "call to arms" has resonated among ISIL supporters and sympathizers.

Our Western partners in Australia, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (UK) have recently disrupted plotting and, unfortunately, had security officers attacked by individuals linked to ISIL or other forms of violent extremism. A French national who took hostages in Paris and shot and killed a policewoman in early January, claimed he was an ISIL supporter. In December 2014, another French national entered a police station in France and began stabbing police officers before being killed by police in a violent extremism attack. Two separate attacks in Canada in October 2014 targeted Canadian soldiers. Additionally, in September and October, the U.K. and Australian authorities separately thwarted attacks targeting local law enforcement. In each scenario, the apprehended individuals had suspected ties to ISIL.

The FBI remains concerned the recent calls by ISIL and its supporters on violent extremist web forums, and the recent events in Europe could continue to motivate home-grown extremists to conduct attacks in the homeland. On-line supporters of ISIL have used various social media platforms to call for retaliation against the United States in the homeland. In one case, an Ohio-based man was arrested in January after he obtained a weapon and stated his intent to conduct an attack on the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC. Using a Twitter account, the individual posted statements, videos, and other content indicating support for ISIL, and he planned his attack based on this voiced support.

Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) continues to pose one of the greatest threats to the United States. AQAP's on-line English magazine *Inspire* advocates for lone wolves to conduct attacks against the homeland and Western targets by utilizing simple and inexpensive tactics and methods. The most recent edition of *Inspire* was released via social media sites in December 2014. As with the previous editions, the magazine promotes the need for lone wolves to carry out small arms attacks and provides specific, detailed "how-to" instructions for constructing a successful bomb.

Historically, AQAP has been focused on large-scale transportation and aviation plotting. However, last month's shooting at a satirical magazine's office in Paris

demonstrates the sophisticated ability of individuals inspired or directed by AQAP to conduct coordinated attacks by combining small arms and explosive devices. The attackers demonstrated extensive preparation and maintained a level of discipline throughout the attack. This assault shows a new wave of extremism; a blending of home-grown violent extremism and an association with a foreign terrorist organization.

Soon after the attacks in Paris, authorities in Belgium conducted a raid against several individuals who were allegedly planning an attack against police personnel. These individuals purportedly had ties to ISIL and allegedly had some connections to the Paris attackers. Our European partners remain on heightened alert and continue to take the steps necessary to mitigate imminent threats.

The recent events in Europe re-emphasize our need to remain vigilant in the homeland as these small-scale attacks are feasible within the United States. Individuals inspired by foreign terrorist groups could be covertly arming themselves with expertise and tools to carry out an attack in the homeland. Community and world events may trigger one of these individuals to act. We remain concerned these types of events, which were widely broadcasted in the media, could inspire “copy-cat” attacks. Additionally, as we saw after ISIL posted videos depicting beheadings of hostages, we continue to see intelligence advocating plots which include public or videotaped beheadings.

The FBI, in partnership with the Department of Homeland Security, is utilizing all investigative techniques and methods to combat the threat these individuals may pose to the United States. In conjunction with our domestic and foreign partners, we are rigorously collecting and analyzing intelligence information as it pertains to the on-going threat posed by ISIL, AQAP, and other foreign terrorist organizations. In each of the FBI’s 56 Field Offices, the Joint Terrorism Task Forces remain vigilant to ensure the safety of the American public. Given the global impact of the Syria and Iraq conflicts, regular engagement with our domestic and foreign partners concerning foreign fighters is critical.

The FBI continues to pursue increased information sharing, efforts to combat radicalization, and exchanges regarding community outreach programs and policing strategies.

Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Thompson, and committee Members, I thank you for this opportunity to testify concerning the threat foreign fighters and home-grown extremists pose to the homeland. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Chairman McCaul. Thank you, Director. Chairman now recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

You know, the American people have seen Americans, the American journalists, beheaded by the executioner, ISIS executioner. It was a wake-up call for the United States, Kayla Mueller, who was just recently executed, and the Jordanian pilot, in one of the most horrific videos I have ever seen, and a very sophisticated Hollywood movie production style, lit on flames. They are barbarians, and I think the barbarians are at the gate.

We want to keep them outside the gate of the United States. I am concerned that some have already returned. So my first question is—we know there are 50,000 ISIS strong. We know that foreign fighters have gone from 15,000 to 20,000. We know that 5,000 of these foreign fighters have Western passports that could get them entrance into the United States. As Director Rasmussen mentioned, there are hundreds of Americans who have traveled to the region to fight with ISIS. We know that some of them have returned, and that is a Classified number.

But my first question is, for those who have returned to the United States, what assurance can you give the American people—what confidence do we have, first that we know all the people who have joined the fight and returned? What are we doing about it to ensure that they do not attack here in the United States? Director Rasmussen.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I will start, but I will ask Mike Steinbach to pitch in on the bureau's efforts here.

In talking about the numbers, Mr. Chairman, you are right to raise questions about our overall level of confidence in numbers. As I tried to say in my remarks, we know what we know, but that comes from a wide variety of sources, and we have always assessed that there is likely more information out there that we have not yet been able to collect either from our foreign partners or from other intelligence means, and that it is possible that there are greater numbers of foreign fighters, and potentially even greater numbers of individuals from Western countries and the United States who have traveled to the conflict zones.

I will let Mike speak to the question of what we can say about individuals who have traveled to the conflict zone and come back, but it is obviously the highest-possible priority for the intelligence community to track their movements.

Chairman MCCAUL. Mr. Steinbach.

Mr. STEINBACH. So certainly, I would not be truthful if I told you that we knew about all the returnees. We—like Nick said, we know what we know. There is a number that we don't know about.

The ones we know about, the numbers of foreign fighters that have returned from Syria, from the conflict zone, every single one of those is a predicated FBI investigation run on the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Regardless of the intelligence or the information that we started with, we go to build the case to disrupt, whether that disruption is in the form of deportation or whether that disruption is in the form of prosecution.

Every single one of those known foreign fighters is an FBI investigation, and we seek to determine the root cause of their travel, what they did in Syria, and then ultimately, if it was in support of a foreign terrorist organization such as ISIL, we look for prosecution or some other disruption.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, in my briefings in having served as a Federal prosecutor, as well, I certainly understand that. I want to commend the FBI for its efforts in this very difficult task to monitor. You are right, you don't know what you don't know. I don't think our human intelligence on the ground in Syria is sufficient to properly identify these individuals, and hopefully, the administration will move forward to do that.

General Taylor, in regards to travel. At Homeland Security, there is a lot of it is about travel, keeping people off airplanes, whether it be al-Nusra, Khorasan Group, AQAP with bombs or these foreign fighters in Syria with ISIS off airplanes. There has been some concern that our European partners have not been fully cooperative.

A good example is the brothers in the Paris attacks, went to Yemen, were on a No-Fly list. We share that information with them. I don't know what they are doing with that. I am concerned about Turkey in terms of their cooperation because, let's face it, these foreign fighters are like a highway going through in and out of Turkey, as demonstrated by the female terrorist in the grocery store who left Paris, went to Istanbul and into Turkey.

What are we doing to ramp up these efforts with our European partners and with Turkey?

Mr. TAYLOR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Certainly, as you indicate, one of our major on-going concerns is a foreign terrorist fighter on an airline coming to the United States from a last-point-of-departure airport. As I indicated in my remarks, we have taken action since July to ramp up security of our aircraft at those locations around Europe and in the Middle East and elsewhere, where we assess there is a potential for those individuals to try to exploit airplane travel to get to the United States.

In addition, the Secretary has directed additional requirements under the ESTA, the Visa Waiver program, to strengthen the amount of data that we have to assess against our community records within both DHS and within the intelligence community, so we can spot and assess—spot individuals who may be involved in nefarious activity.

I would say that we are all concerned that we only know what we know. Ramping up our work with our European partners and other partners around the world has certainly increased since the attacks in Paris. I was just in London last week with the Five Country Ministerial. There is a clear understanding that sharing of information on these individuals across all of our five country partners is critical to the ability to detect.

We now have, and I would ask Nick to speak a little bit to it, within NCTC the capacity to begin to track these individuals that we are getting data on from across the world. That gives us a better confidence that if someone were to try to circumvent our security systems, we would at least be able to know who they were and what they were trying to accomplish.

That is not a perfect system yet, we continue to add to it today. I just saw a report this morning, so it continues to grow, but the cooperation with our European partners has been significantly enhanced in the course of the last 6 months.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, I think since Paris it has been enhanced. I know it is—if State Department was here they could answer the coordination and cooperation with these databases. No-fly list, terrorist watch list, we have had a difficult time having them recognize that in Europe, Canada with some privacy concerns as well, and I hope that we can work that out so that we have a free exchange of intelligence and information to keep these terrorists off airplanes, stop the travel, and stop them from coming into the United States.

My time is just about expired, but one last question. The state is not here to answer this, but I am very concerned and I sent a letter to Susan Rice about these refugees, both in Syria and Turkey. I have been over there and I have seen them. Yes, most of them are women and children, but there are male actors that concern me.

I think this would be a huge mistake if we bring in these refugees into the United States that could potentially be radicalized. Then we got a—we are not only trying to keep these guys, the foreign fighters, out, but under this would be a Federally-sanctioned welcome party, if you will, to potential terrorists in the United States.

Can the three of you, and I know this is a very maybe awkward question to ask you, but all three of you, do you agree with that

policy that we should bring in these Syrian refugees into the United States?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I am not in a position to agree with the policy, that is really under the offices of the Secretary of State and his response—

Chairman MCCAUL. But do you think that would pose a threat or danger to Americans?

Mr. TAYLOR. We are concerned about any group of people coming to the United States who may be coming to the United States for nefarious purposes. Therefore, under our CIS responsibilities, want to make sure that if we are asked to vet individuals from any part of the world to come to the United States, that we have applied the most rigorous screening that is available within the U.S. Government.

I think we have learned that lesson in the past, and so any tasking we are given from a Departmental point of view with our intelligence community partners will be as thorough as we can make it to make sure—

Chairman MCCAUL. My time is—I mean, very succinctly, Director Rasmussen, Mr. Steinbach, would that bring in Syrian refugees pose a greater risk to Americans?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I mean, it is clearly a population of concern and, as Under Secretary Taylor said, what we want to be able to do is apply the full weight of U.S. intelligence community holdings to the vetting and screening process so that we can unearth any information that we may have in our holdings that gives us concern about particular individuals.

Thank you. The Chairman recognizes the Ranking Member.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, you said we don't know what we don't know.

Mr. Steinbach.

Mr. STEINBACH. Yes, I am concerned. We will have to take a look at those lists and go through all of the intelligence holdings and be very careful to try and identify connections to foreign terrorist groups.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

Chairman recognizes the Ranking Member.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Following on the Chairman's questioning, is it our procedure for anyone coming to this country that we provide a thorough vetting of that individual, or those individuals, before they are allowed to come?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir, it is.

Mr. THOMPSON. Is that your understanding, Mr. Rasmussen?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Yes—National Counterterrorism Center as a information center provides the information that allows the screening agencies to decide—make the decisions on entry or exit.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. Steinbach.

Mr. STEINBACH. You have to have information to vet, so the concern in Syria is that we don't have systems in places on the ground to collect the information to vet. That would be the concern is we would be vetting—databases don't hold the information on those individuals, and that is the concern.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

This is to General Taylor and to you, Director Steinbach. The Business Executives for National Security recently released a report finding that U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies are currently operating without an enterprise-wide concept at the Federal level. This inhibits the Federal Government's ability to conduct domestic intelligence activities in support of counterterrorism. This is a concern given the fact that there could be potential home-grown violent extremists here in the United States.

Do you agree with that assumption?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I have had a conversation with the BENS leadership. We don't agree with that assumption. We believe the enterprise partnership that we have with the FBI is as strong and as effective as it can be today, especially adding the information that is available through the NCTC.

So, no, we do not agree. Things can be better. We work at making it better every day, but the lack of an enterprise approach I don't think is a fair assessment of where we are today.

Mr. THOMPSON. Director Steinbach.

That BENS strategy piece is outdated. It was a good attempt, but they looked at information that was 4 or 5 years old, so no, I don't agree. Updated information, had they looked at what is going on now, they would have likely come to a different conclusion.

Mr. THOMPSON. Have you shared that with the business executives?

Mr. STEINBACH. Yes, we have.

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you.

General Taylor, you have outlined in quite detail what the impact of not being funded after February 27 would be. We are talking about the threat to foreign fighters and home-grown terror.

Can you, in short order, indicate to this committee what kinds of impact without money the Department would be faced?

Mr. TAYLOR. Certainly, sir. Certainly, sir, and not a total list, but for example, nearly \$2.6 billion in funding for new grants, including \$103 billion in homeland security grants and \$680 million in foreign fighters assistance grants cannot be approved—disseminated under the current continuing resolution.

One hundred ninety million dollars in new upgrades for remote and mobile—video surveillance along the Rio Grande Valley to enhance our detection capability there. One hundred forty-two million dollars in Secret Service protective activities as we are get into the election cycle. So, there is a long list of things that we are precluded from doing and investing in without a full funding bill from the Congress.

Mr. THOMPSON. One of the things that a lot of us are confronted with as well as our constituents, is we all have Federal buildings in our communities. After the situation in Paris, the Secretary ordered an enhanced effort at those Federally-protected facilities. Would the lack of money for the Department create a security risk at some of those buildings?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I can't speak spec—we are continuing to enhance our security efforts at facilities across the country, Federal facilities that we are charged with protecting. Specifics on whether or not FPS would be able to continue that, I would have to take that as a question and get back to you.

Mr. THOMPSON. Please, I think we need to hear since we have quite a few of those facilities.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. THOMPSON. I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The Chairman recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will yield my time to my colleague from Texas, Mr. Hurd.

Mr. HURD. I would like to thank the gentleman from Texas and you here today. I appreciate you all coming here.

I know the difficulty of the task that you all are charged with having spent 9 years as an undercover officer in the CIA, chasing al-Qaeda and the Taliban and places like that—organizations like that. I know the difficulty and—I know that the people in your—the men and women in your organizations are operating as if it is September 12, 2001. Please, when you go back to your organizations, thank them for all of their hard work on behalf of us.

When I was in Pakistan, Afghanistan, you know, the bad guys would push their message through night letters. At night, they would drop letters on people's doorsteps. Now, they have social media, and all three of you will have highlighted that in your testimony and in the documents that you submitted.

My question is—is what efforts—who is coordinating the effort to counter that ideology on social media and these other elements? You know, 20 percent of any counter-insurgency is cutting off the head of the snake, 80 percent is addressing the underlying concerns.

Who is leading that? What are you guys doing in each one of your agencies to counter that?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I will start, and certainly welcome help from my partners up here.

In terms of the counter-ISIL strategy that the President has laid out for our effort to degrade and ultimately defeat ISIL, State Department has the lead for working with our international partners and the overseas environment to counter violent extremism, and to create a counter-narrative and a counter-messaging effort. I would certainly defer to them to kind-of describe the whole range of activities which have included a number of overseas summit meetings and other gatherings designed to coordinate, particularly inside the region, inside the Middle East to make sure that our partners in the coalition are doing their part to counter the narrative.

Here at home, we have, as I described in my testimony, I think a very effective partnership among the four agencies and departments with responsibility for countering violent extremism. DHS, the FBI, the Department of Justice, and NCTC. As I said, we work together almost seamlessly on a range of difference CVE initiatives, leveraging the capabilities that each of our departments have.

I say that because it is the law enforcement community that has the reach into local law enforcement. So FBI has that advantage. Homeland Security has the reach into a network of community organizations and other Homeland Security-oriented populations in our major metropolitan areas that gives them reach into. NCTC tries to provide analytic support and, you know, content generation to help us with this effort at outreach in the domestic environment.

So, it really is—I rarely would say this—we are seamless as we could, I think, almost possibly be in terms of our work together. The question is, as I mentioned to the Chairman earlier, is scale. Are we doing enough of it? Do we have enough reach into all of the parts of the country where this is a potential problem? I would not argue to you that we are there yet on that score.

Mr. HURD. Thank you.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. The President's CVE summit will give us a chance to kind-of give that an important boost.

Mr. STEINBACH. Yes, just one note on context. So, you know, part of it—a part of this message has to be pushed down at the local level, just like parents have to watch their children on the internet and on social media for pedophiles and financial criminals. We have to have that same message. You have to have interaction. If you look at the case in Denver that was highlighted, you look at other cases, we see a lack of understanding by parents and guardians to what is going on, and that tool needs to be monitored. It is a powerful tool and it provides quite a bit of reach. So, that is a part of it at the local level.

Mr. HURD. Thank you. Next question is two parts.

Again, when I was, you know, in the intelligence community and operating an alias, I would frequently travel to a lot of countries, and I never ended up going to that end destination. I would go somewhere else driving because it was a lot easier. So, you know, the concept of broken travel.

What are you all doing in order to monitor the broken travel of folks that may end up going to Syria, but don't go directly there, drive in? The other issue is, what new intelligence capabilities do we need in Syria in order for you all better do your job back here?

Mr. TAYLOR. Let me speak first, sir, to the nature of how we monitor broken travel. It is a concern. People can book a flight to an end-destination, and stop at an end-point and go other places. We understand that phenomenon.

We are able to use our travel data to better spot those instances when they occur. As I mentioned earlier, taking that information and bouncing it against the other holdings within the community to better understand the phenomenon. It is not perfect yet. It continues to refine, but it is an issue that we now understand how that works and use our travel security tools to monitor it most effectively.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Sir, you raise a very good point about the challenge of collecting intelligence in Syria right now. Without going into too much detail in an open session, it is a tremendously challenging collection environment for all of our intelligence agencies because we are not present on the ground there in a traditional way. We don't have the footprint on the ground that we would have in many places around the world with a diplomatic, military, and intelligence presence.

So, we are forced to be more creative, more innovative, more entrepreneurial in trying to close that gap.

We can talk about that more in closed session, but it—all of the intelligence agencies have prioritized this at the absolute top of our priority list in terms of devoting resources, energy, and effort to do so. I would not argue, though, that we have closed the gap on

where we need to be in terms of our understanding with granularity what is going on on the ground in Syria.

In many cases, the information we have about foreign fighters traveling into the conflict zone stops when they get there, and we don't have as much insight, or nearly enough insight, into what actually happens when they are on the ground in Syria. That is a gap we are trying to close.

Mr. HURD. I think they covered it sufficiently. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Gentleman's time has expired. The gentleman from Rhode Island, Mr. Langevin, is recognized.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I want to thank our witnesses for your testimony today.

I would like to turn to the discussion that we have been involved with this morning about tracking those individuals who have been in the conflict zone in Iraq or Syria fighting with ISIS who have U.S. or Western passports.

It is my understanding that we have, you know, somewhat our arms around being able to track those with U.S. passports, but as we have alluded to this morning, we are talking about maybe on the hundreds, or a hundred or so persons with U.S. passports.

But it could be in the thousands for people with Western passports that are fighting in Syria, many of whom with ISIS, and yet those individuals that could travel potentially then back to European countries and could come to the United States, particularly those from Visa Waiver countries—and what I am hearing, what I have heard in past testimony—that it is very difficult perhaps to track those individuals particularly because there are certain governments particularly in the European Union that are reluctant to share threat information on their citizens due to privacy concerns.

I was just in Munich this past weekend at the Munich Security Conference, met with Britain's—their Secretary of Defense, and he confirmed that that is a concern not so much for the United Kingdom because their privacy laws are different, and so that kind of information sharing is not—restricted from Great Britain, but more an issue with continental European countries.

So has this been the experience of NCTC? What are we doing to close that gap? Because that is a significant blind spot for us.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. In talking about sharing of information, particularly from our European partners, I think it is maybe useful to think of it happening in two different ways. One is kind-of structured, routinized sharing of travel information of the sort that Under Secretary Taylor mentioned before. We certainly want that kind of sharing from our European partners because it would help us with the screening that we are talking about.

But the other kind of sharing that I think is worth mentioning, and where we have seen, I would say, a fairly dramatic improvement with our European partners over the last couple of years, is intelligence service to intelligence service sharing on individuals of specific terrorism concern.

We have been on a bit of an evangelical effort over the past few years to try to engage our European partners on this, and I would argue that a couple of years ago, we were in the position of explaining, Gee, this is a terrible threat, we need to work together on it.

We are well past that now. Any European capital you go to or any European partner you engage with jumps into that conversation right away and is quite open in sharing what they know, including often about their own citizens. What that allows us to do is potentially populate our TIDE, our Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment, with information about specific individuals that can aid our screening process.

So I don't want to paint an entirely dire picture of our European partners' work in this area because I would argue that in intelligence channels, it has been almost unprecedentedly a good news story. Much room for improvement, and Europe is not a monolith, and so certainly, across the continent, there are areas where we could get better, more cooperative sharing arrangements.

But I did want to distinguish between the two types of sharing because there is a kind of bulk data-sharing discussion that is sometimes more difficult for our European partners. Then there is more granular, specific sharing about known individuals on whom we have intelligence reporting where I think they are often quite responsive.

Mr. LANGEVIN. But what I want to get to is the question, should we be insisting or trying to work with NATO partners, our European partners, to change their privacy laws, or can Congress play a role in helping to ease these privacy concerns? For example, do you believe that the judicial redress announced last week as part of the PPD-28 review would help alleviate these challenges?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I would say that the privacy concerns in Europe are significant, and not just in this area of sharing terrorism information, but in all aspects of how private information is shared for business, for Government and elsewhere.

The Chairman referred to it earlier. There are now new laws in several countries, particularly in the five I's about enhancing that sharing. There is a discussion at the European Union this week about EUPNR, which we are encouraged by and hope that the European parliament will move forward to pass a European-wide PNR requirement that allows for that data to be collected across Europe and shared across the European Union.

We think that will be a big step, but we also think if that doesn't work, then we can work bilaterally with individual countries to share data. The important thing for us is using every tool in our toolkit to get the information shared between us and our partners, and back and forth. There is not one set of processes that are going to do that, but we are going to use every tool in the toolkit to make sure those relationships work and work effectively.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I would just add one thing, though, to your point, Mr. Langevin, on engaging European legislatures or parliaments. I mean, I think anything we can collectively do to send the message that if information is shared with us, we use it for the purposes that we have asked for it, and we handle it responsibly and in accordance with the terms on which it was given to us. If that can provide reassurance to European partners and increase the flow of information, then all to the good.

Mr. LANGEVIN. Okay. I appreciate your answer. I just would say I still think this is—until we get this seamless, and we are getting

all the information that we need, it is a blind spot. I think it is a problem and I think we need to work on this.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Duncan, is recognized.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for a very timely hearing. I would ask that we schedule a Classified hearing, briefing with some of these intelligence community to get a little different intake—input.

Chairman MCCAUL. That is a good idea.

Mr. DUNCAN. Yes. Thank you. So Director Rasmussen, al-Qaeda—they are still alive and well, right? They are still a threat to freedom, global freedom?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Yes, sir. They certainly pose a significant terrorist threat.

Mr. DUNCAN. In fact, I would say that al-Qaeda, ISIS, al-Qaeda in all of its elements, AQAP, AQ MINA, Boko Haram, al-Shabaab, Abu Sayyaf—all these terrorist groups are still active, right?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Yes, sir.

Mr. DUNCAN. So we shouldn't take our eye off the ball with just focusing on ISIS and think of this globally and not get hung up on the 50 shades of terrorism, talk about terrorism about terrorism, that these groups are a threat all over the globe.

So let me lay out a scenario that actually happened. I led a CODEL back in late May to Europe. Right before we arrived in Brussels, a foreign fighter had traveled to Syria about a year, I believe, maybe 18 months, radicalized, came back through Turkey, through Germany into Brussels, shot up a Jewish museum, killed three people. A fourth one was wounded. I don't know if that person died or not or remember that.

That was right before we arrived. It was very—it was very real to the Belgians. It was very real to the French because this foreign fighter fled out of Belgium through France and was captured in Marseilles, trying to catch a boat or a plane to North Africa. Had he gotten out of Europe into North Africa, he would have disappeared.

This was a foreign fighter that took advantage of the Schengen region, the open borders in Europe. From what I remember from talking with the folks in Europe at that time is that Germany had information about this individual who had traveled through Germany but failed to share in a timely manner with either the Belgium or the French authorities.

So I am concerned—(A), Mr. Chairman, you brought up the point of Visa Waiver. I am concerned with the whole Schengen open travel, open border region and visa waiver and the ability of foreign fighters to flow to this country. I am also concerned about the open borders and the ability to of foreign fighters to get back to Europe, travel to Marseilles or to the south of France, and hop over from Portugal or Spain into North Africa and disappear, or maybe rejoin the fight with Boko Haram or al-Shabaab, or travel back to the Middle East and continue these evil acts.

So in a post-Snowden environment, where I believe the reason Germany was slow to inform the French or the Belgians was be-

cause of intelligence sharing and what was being revealed at the time about the United States spying on Chancellor Merkel.

So in the post-Snowden environment, let me ask you, are we communicating with our allies in the region, our global allies in this war on terror? How do you see that communication being hampered in the post-Snowden era? Either one. I would rather—let's talk to Mr. Taylor first.

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I think our communication is robust with our allies across the world on this particular issue. It is not perfect. Certainly, the challenges within the Schengen zone in terms of free travel once an individual gets into Schengen and is able to move is understood by the European Union. Hence the discussions about PNR and other sorts of data exchanged between the Schengen zone countries to better remedy that particular circumstance that you describe.

It is not perfect yet, but I think they recognize the security deficit that is created—cross-border movement that is allowed within the Schengen zone at this point in time and are looking at ways in which they can remedy that. But I would tell you that the bilateral and multilateral engagement on this issue of foreign fighters and sharing of data is daily and consistent and robust.

Mr. DUNCAN. Mr. Rasmussen, in 41 seconds.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. You are right to point to an overlay or an overhang from the period of disclosures that included the Snowden disclosures. But I would argue that since that period, we have seen an increased sense of shared threat among our European partners precisely because of the attacks like the Brussels attack and certainly what we saw in Paris and in Belgium again recently. So that, I would argue, there is a bit of a pendulum swing to this process that is for the moment trending in a direction of more sharing and willingness to share information.

But again, I would argue with intelligence channels, that is not an immediate thing that just happened in the last 2 weeks since Paris. I think we have—that has been a pretty consistent refrain over the past couple of years. The politics of this issue are very difficult for some of our European partners, but as professional intelligence organizations working with each other, I would argue a lot goes on that we can be comfortable is useful to us.

Mr. DUNCAN. Yes. I thank the gentleman. My time is expired. But communication is key in this realm, and I think you have acknowledged that.

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate the lenience, and I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank the gentleman for his insight, as always.

Gentleman from New York, Mr. Higgins.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just on two aspects of this. One is the nature of terrorist attacks has changed profoundly. Al-Qaeda and al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula has relied traditionally on complex plots involving explosions in airliners. Now, in September 2014, an ISIS leader told would-be recruits not to bother coming to Iraq or Syria but to launch attacks in their home countries. ISIS has called for attacks on soft targets in the West by any means available, including using a car to drive at pedestrians.

The other issue is technology. As Mr. Steinbach had said, technology moves faster than legislation, a lot faster. You characterize the FBI as labeling this, you know, “going dark.” It is increasingly difficult to monitor the communications within terrorist networks. The proliferation of often encrypted, covert, coded information to prevent unauthorized use, from Skype to gaming forums to other new technology, has made surveillance tremendously technologically demanding, and in some cases, virtually impossible.

Moreover, Apple’s latest mobile operating system came with a default encryption, and Google’s Android is soon to follow. In these systems, companies do not have access to their customers’ passwords, and thus can’t capture their messages.

Now from a customer standpoint, from a consumer standpoint, you know, that is a very good thing. But those who are malicious—those—the malignancy of terror—it takes away a major tool that law enforcement uses to thwart terrorist activity in its planning stages.

So, could you comment on that and what it is, if anything, we can be doing? You know, there was a time where publicly-owned telephone companies were all too willing to cooperate with law enforcement agencies for wiretaps and those kinds of things. That is no longer the case, and this poses a major, major challenge to Western law enforcement officials.

Mr. STEINBACH. Sir, I agree with you, the threat—first of all, is diffused, it is evolving, and so I think sometimes we focus too much on the other end versus the threat. Whether it is a complex attack, a coordinated attack such as Paris, or a more simple use of a vehicle as we saw in Jerusalem.

We need to focus on the threat and the commonality in many of these threat streams is the internet, is social media. I think it needs to start with an education. I think there is probably a little bit of a backlash from Snowden, but there is also the TV version of it, what they think is doable and how simple it is. In the reality of lawful intercept, there is a very structured process in place that is reviewed by judicial, either on the criminal side or in FISAC—in the court.

So, I think there needs to be an education piece that we are not looking to snoop where we shouldn’t be allowed to snoop, but we have to have the lawful ability to intercept. Whether you are talking about a on-going criminal matter, a dangerous criminal matter, or you are talking about a terrorist communicating over the—either overseas or within the United States.

So, I think it needs to start with a public message for all of us to explain exactly what it is. Then we need to go back and provide legislative tools, much like there were with Kahlea, that apply to not just a small number of telecommunication providers, but apply to the majority of those providers who serve as communication platforms. I think that is an issue that needs to be resolved and head-on immediately.

I know from the FBI’s perspective, we are engaging with the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the major city sheriffs and the chiefs, the USIC and others to explain our position and to show them very much that we are not crying wolf. This is a problem and in a closed session we can show you the numbers of how

we are going dark. But it is a grave concern, and your point is right on. Without that lawful tool, we risk an attack.

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you, and thank you for raising that important issue. I think it is going to provide a mode of communication for not only criminals, but potential terrorists to communicate without any ability of us to intercept that. So, with that the Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from Pennsylvania, Mr. Perry.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Taylor, a man named, a jihadist as I would characterize him, named Abdul Sabah from Florida was allowed back into the country and wandered around here for about 6 months in between visits to Syria. Now, he eventually met his demise on his own hand as a suicide bomber in Syria, but as far as I know, we didn't even know. The United States didn't even know that he made two previous trips. So, this individual is obviously somebody that we would be interested in and poses a threat to our security.

How did we—how did your agency—what did we miss? How did we miss it?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sorry, you are correct that this individual who later committed a suicide attack in Syria did return to the United States from Syria without our knowledge, and I think without—was not under an FBI investigation. It was only after his suicide attack that we learned of his activity.

I think that incident really reinforced our understanding of the need to have better intelligence on what was going on in Syria.

Mr. PERRY. I agree with you, I am just—how did we miss him? What has changed, what have you done in your agency to make sure that that doesn't happen again?

How did we miss him? What has changed?

Mr. TAYLOR. What has changed is our better understanding of how these people move, where they move, working with our foreign partners in terms of sharing intelligence, understanding the intelligence that is coming out and the communications patterns that are going on that perhaps weren't as robust.

Mr. PERRY. Are there any concrete steps that you can describe right now that you have changed based on missing him and to make sure it doesn't happen again?

Mr. TAYLOR. I think I would share that with the FBI in terms of what the FBI has done in addition to what DHS has done. In terms of—

Mr. PERRY. What have you done?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, we have extensively changed our methodology for tracking travel across the world, to the United States and out of the United States to these sorts of locations. In working with our intelligence partners across the world to better identify the linkages between potential Americans and others—

Mr. PERRY. With all due respect, in the interest of time, is that information Classified?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Can we set up an off-site that I can get that information from you? I appreciate it. Thank you.

Moving on, I am just curious to get an understanding of how you characterize this threat. By what name does your agencies refer to

what I describe as a global jihadi movement? That is what I described it as. What—you are talking about foreign fighters, but the larger picture, I am just trying to get a mind's eye into your view of it from an agency perspective.

How do you describe this threat?

Mr. TAYLOR. We describe it as radical extremism.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Mr. Rasmussen.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Global extremists.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. Mr. Steinbach.

Mr. STEINBACH. Sir, I don't care what you call it. It is a threat to U.S. citizens here and abroad, so it is people trying to conduct violent attacks, whether you call it global extremism, al-Qaeda, AQAP, it is a threat. I am not going to—I don't care about labeling. I worry about their intent.

Mr. PERRY. Well, I appreciate that, sir, and I agree with you, but you can't fix a problem if you refuse, or unwilling, or unable to label it, and I think it is more than just global extremism.

There is a particular global extremism, and that is why I characterize it as jihadi. The fact that none of you want to say—you know, characterize it that concerns me because that is not identifying the problem.

But, moving on, yet again in the interest of time. The UAE, Saudi Arabia and Egypt considered the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization. I am wondering, in the interest of pursuing foreign fighters, if—that comes into your consideration, radicalization and how it is perpetrated in this country.

Do you look at those organizations, or that particular organization, or another one for that matter—CAIR, those folks wander around this country with impunity and—may or may not be involved in radicalization based on the fact that some nations have considered them a terrorist organization. Does that work into your calculation into determining radicalization? Do you have any knowledge of radicalization or participation by any of the—either of those two organizations?

Mr. STEINBACH. Sir—

Mr. PERRY. And Muslim Brotherhood.

Mr. STEINBACH. If you are asking me if I consider the Muslim Brotherhood a concern, I do.

Mr. PERRY. Okay.

Mr. STEINBACH. If you look at the founding of the Muslim Brotherhood, what it stood for, where it began, absolutely. There is, at the core, there are concerns about their ideology and their radicalization.

Mr. PERRY. All right, and so do you do investigations? Have any investigations led you to those organizations at all, regarding radicalization of America?

Mr. STEINBACH. Absolutely, There are historical investigations that at the root, the individual was radicalized by Muslim Brotherhood entities. We don't focus on the group. The individual has to have an intent, and that is where we focus the effort.

Where is the radicalization come from is important for us, but it is not where I can hang my hat, and it is certainly not what I can build a case on.

Mr. PERRY. Appreciate it. Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman MCCAUL. Just to the gentleman's point, I—in deference to these individuals, in their reports they refer to it as Sunni extremism. I believe it is radical Islamist extremism that is the enemy. It is important to define that, it defies me why the administration won't call it that, but I will support these three witnesses, who, in their reporting, call—I think called threat what it is.

Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Taylor, thank you for your service.

I want to go back to your very first remarks that you began this hearing with. You were talking about your concerns with the budget in homeland security. You know, there is a dangerous game of chicken that is going on right now, where in reaction to the President's immigration efforts, the reaction has been to threaten withholding of the very funding that protects our homeland security.

Now, I don't think in the minds of the public they think there will be an absolute cutting of—out those funds, because that would be so radical a reaction. I don't think they think that is feasible. However, my point is, the reaction of going from these stop-gap budgets, continuing resolutions from month to month, backwards and forwards, that presents real limits on what you can do itself.

So, I want you to focus on the fact that, forget about for a second the threat of just the cutting off of those funds. Right now the way you are functioning is a threat to your ability to deal with our security.

Could you talk to that important point, I believe?

Mr. TAYLOR. Certainly, sir. Secretary Johnson has spoken to that point, and as we have spoken during our testimony today that the threat that we face is evolving and changing. He needs the flexibility to adjust tactics and techniques as this threat evolves under the current issues. With the continuing resolution he does not have that flexibility.

I would add one other thing. Before this committee, and before the authorizing committees, or the intelligence committees, as I came on board, one of the major issues discussed was the issue of morale. We have 220,000 employees in our Department who every day come to work to try to secure this country. It sends a terrible signal, in my view, to them and their responsibility when the Congress has not fully funded the effort that they are charged with accomplishing.

So, not only from an ability to react to the changing nature of the threat, we have a challenge in our Department in ensuring our people understand that we support them and that they are going to get—

Mr. KEATING. I thank you for that. I just don't want it lost as we are talking about all these things today that we should be doing, that you are limited right now and able—you are limited in being able to address those things because of this stop-gap or continuing resolution approach that just keeps going on.

Along those lines, one of the programs that I am interested in, particularly that Director Rasmussen talked about in general, was a program with Los Angeles, Minneapolis, and Boston. Some of the

UASI money is going to fund that, and it is joint with homeland and with the Justice Department in general. It is the effort dealing with the National strategy on empowering local partners to prevent violent extremism.

To me, that is a critical point going forward, too. I see it right in my own home State in Boston, in our ability to deal with that.

Director, could you comment on that, and any other witnesses?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Sure, and the three cities that you mentioned, sir, are pilot cities in an effort to try to test and—and see if we can—what we are doing in an effort to counter violent extremism in our—in our communities here in the United States is, in fact, a workable solution, working with State and local partners, and is therefore something scalable and we can use it across a larger number of cities.

The three pilot cities are going to be featured at the upcoming CVE summit that the White House is convening in just a couple weeks. There will be an obvious opportunity there to show other communities the benefits of participating in an effort to pull all of the different tools of a community together, not just the Federal tools as Director Steinbach said. This largely has to be a locally-led initiative, but enabled and with content help generated by the Government.

Mr. KEATING. Yes, this committee has done much work, particularly in light of the Boston Marathon bombing, in showing the multiplier effect of dealing with our local, and State, and county resources and assets in there. So, that is why it is important.

Very quickly, one other point with the Passenger Name Record information. I mean, it spent 2013 in the European parliament that that has languished. It is great to hear a corporation with the United States and our allies is going great, but they are not talking to each other. Without that, we have a problem.

Can you see any changes, or recommend any changes, should this stalemate continue with the Visa Waiver program?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, you mean the stalemate within the—

Mr. KEATING. Within the European Union and parliament in dealing with this.

Mr. TAYLOR. Of course our Visa Waiver program agreements are with individual countries.

Mr. KEATING. Right.

Mr. TAYLOR. We are looking to strengthen within that bilateral relationship the exchange of information under the Visa Waiver program. So, we would love to see the European parliament come through and decide to do this across Europe, but that will not dissuade us from engaging bilaterally on the information exchanges that we think we need to—

Mr. KEATING. I agree with you, but I wanted to hear your comments in that regard, because there has been some discussion on changing that. But I think really we compromise our security in doing that.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Let me just add, the gentleman mentioned Boston. We have the Watertown police, as you know, in town to receive the Presidential Medal of Valor for Public Safety. I can't

think of a organization more deserving than the Watertown police and the heroic efforts on that fateful day.

With that, the Chairman now recognizes the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Clawson.

Mr. CLAWSON. Thank you for coming, you all, today. I also pass along my best to the folks that work with y'all. They got a real tough job. Democracy is messy on Capitol Hill, and so the circumstances are difficult. So my full respect and appreciation for what y'all do.

When I think about terrorists coming out of a dangerous part of the world like this and what is going on over there, I always think to Turkey. Honorable Mr. Rasmussen, you mentioned it, I think, earlier in your comments. On the one hand, Turkey has a proud history, a secular history. They got how many thousands of terrorists go to the Aegean Sea every year, manufacturing product going out of Ismir back to Europe, and a member of NATO.

So you would think, on the one hand, these folks ought to be motivated to get things under control here with respect to the highway of tourists. On the other hand, I read about hostage exchanges with ISIL. There has been a long history, as you know, of problems with the Kurds. Also, it almost feels like there is ambivalence with respect to the violence on the border—I mean, on the border, with a war going on.

It doesn't feel to me like we can solve this problem over there, and therefore, over here without pinning down where Turkey really is. I don't know where they are. If we can't get an ally who is a member of NATO to help us in the region, I am not sure what we could expect from anybody else.

So I—you know, I am befuddled on where this is going and how we could ever have success without Turkey, and I am really interested in what you have to say about that.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Well, I think you are absolutely right, sir, that success in the counter-ISIL campaign or any effort we are engaged in to try to stem the flow of foreign fighters into and out of the conflict zone requires a functioning, effective partnership with the Turks across the whole range of issues—intelligence, law enforcement, diplomacy, all of that.

It is also true, though, that Turkey will always look at its interests through the prism of their own sense of self-interest, and how they prioritize particular requests that we make for cooperation doesn't always align with our prioritization. That is just a simple fact.

We have a complicated on-going discussion with the Turks, all of the Turkish government elements, about the specific ways in which Turkey can contribute to the coalition. I wish my State Department partners were here today to kind-of talk you through all of the different ways in which they are doing that, but it is a—truly a mixed story. There are areas where we receive profoundly effective cooperation from our Turkish partners and it is tremendously useful, and yet from our perspective, we think there is more to the relationship that we could get more that we need from the relationship to effectively address our concerns.

Mr. CLAWSON. How do we take the next step, or is that purely a State Department issue at this point?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, certainly, State Department has the lead, but our Department has been engaged with the Turks on very specific border security and other discussions to try to push forward more cooperation in that regard, and that is continuing. The Turks will be here for the CVE summit. Those engagements will continue. But as Director Rasmussen mentioned, it is a challenge at this point. But we see lights of cooperation beginning to flow in ways that we, I think, will want to explore going forward with them.

Mr. CLAWSON. Well, we will push this in Foreign Affairs Committee, as well, because it seems that if we speak about a broad coalition to take on global terrorism and we don't have a fully committed Turkey on one bookend, and the other bookend is Syria, for God's sakes, you know, what are we really doing here?

So I appreciate y'all's comments, and I think until you get full cooperation from the Turks, this is going to be a real uphill battle, in my view.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentleman on this important point. Our NATO ally Turkey could be a real help with the situation. I think we need to put pressure towards that end.

Gentlelady from New York, Miss Rice, is recognized.

Miss RICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So I am not sure who can answer this, or all of you or one of you. Can you expand on the enhancements that are—have been made or are planning—or are going to be made on the ESTA system for the Visa Waiver countries to better secure, obviously, our Nation's homeland? To what extent—or where do you get the funding to ensure that whatever enhancements need to be made can be paid for?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, ma'am. In October, we added six additional data elements that were required for all—and I don't have the specific ones, I can get them to you—that would broaden the data elements that have to be filled in in an ESTA application that comes to us before the travel is accomplished.

That has allowed us to do more thorough screenings against our databases of those people who would come in from Visa Waiver countries. We are considering additional adjustments both bilaterally and across our entire program that are now being discussed in our Department to continue to strengthen the security of the Visa Waiver program and not to give us better confidence, more confidence here on the Hill and elsewhere that the security of that program is as effective as it can be.

Miss RICE. In terms of oversight, how is that we ensure that every country that is part of the Visa Waiver program is actually keeping up with the standards that we need in order for us to get the information that we need?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, we do biannual reviews on the ground in those countries, of every Visa Waiver country. One of the things we are discussing is whether we should do that annually, as opposed to bi-annually. There are other things that we are discussing to strengthen our confidence that what we believe is happening in those countries is indeed happening. There will be more to come on that in the future as those deliberations continue.

Miss RICE. Okay. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you.

Gentlemen, from Georgia, Mr. Loudermilk, is recognized.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To the witnesses here today, I appreciate you being here. I don't know that when in my lifetime, I have been more concerned about the internal security of America, not just from our safety and security, but our economic security and on several fronts for different reasons.

One of the things that I know that has been spoken about here and at other times is the threat of ISIS as not only being what I understand the most well-funded, the best organized terrorist organization possibly in the history, but also their ability to effectively use the internet and social media.

There is one thing to use social media, but those of us engaged in politics, we spend a lot of time studying the effective use of social media. How do you come up and stand out amongst billions of users across the world? It appears that ISIS is doing a very good job. They are effectively marketing to our youth, which is specially concerning to me, especially those that are vulnerable, those are—feel disenfranchised and even using video games, as you have mentioned.

So what are we doing—are we working with internet providers, social media providers to help combat the use of the internet and social media to spread their radical Islamic idealism that I think is a threat to the future? Are we working with those companies, and are they participating?

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I will start, but I will certainly ask Mike to take this on, too, because the bureau is having quite a bit of direct engagement with these providers.

Partnership with these technology companies on whose platforms this propaganda is riding is a central part of any strategy to counter what is going on. The President's CVE summit will have a private-sector component to it for precisely that reason, to make these companies partners with us.

This partnership has a number of elements. It is in part exposing them to the information about what is happening on platforms that they control so they understand it. If they can understand when terms of service violations are taking place that they should intervene and take steps to block certain content.

But it is also to—again, to deepen a partnership and make sure that they understand that we need to be partners with them in going at this more systemically, not simply in response to a single video or a single YouTube posting or something, but actually to think about what kind of relationship between the Federal Government, law enforcement, and these companies makes sense if we are going to tackle this phenomenon that is creating a serious homeland security vulnerability.

Mr. STEINBACH. So I will just add, sir, that, you know, social media, when you look at the volume and numbers of companies, it is hundreds of companies. So we do have direct engagement with those companies that are U.S.-based, but when you look at the totality of what the terrorist groups are using, many of these are

small social media companies that reside offshore, who flaunt their lack of cooperation with law enforcement. So that is the problem.

There is a—you can go to Twitter or many other companies, but there is just a large number out there that, unfortunately, it is difficult to get our arms around. So there needs to be thought towards, how do we affect the totality of the social media platforms that are out there?

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Well, obviously, the dominant players in social media are American companies. Have they been receptive to work with you? Have you found them to be cooperative?

Mr. STEINBACH. So we have had on-going continual dialogue. I think we have a team there now on the West Coast talking to the companies. I would say they understand our viewpoint. I don't think those companies and the individuals who work in those companies want to see bad things happen. They balance the right to privacy versus their diligence and the requirement to keep people safe.

But it is a volume thing. So it is not—they try to follow the terms of agreement, and certainly, if they see individuals violating those terms, those service agreement contracts, they shut them down. But when you are talking with that volume, it is a challenge for them. So I would say they understand our problem. We continue to work with them to get them to develop process technology to help us out. But that is just one part of it.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Okay. Thank you. I only have a few seconds left, but just wanted to say that when I was in the military, one of the things that we got to was the basic ideology behind an enemy. That is how you formed a strategy for a long-term defeat. My concern is that we are not properly identifying this as radical Islamic extremists to have a long-term fight, a strategy against the ideology. Typically, on the battlefield, most soldiers have a survival instinct that we know that when it comes down to it, they do want to live. In this case, this ideology is that death is a reward.

So I would just emphasize the importance, as Ronald Reagan understood, understanding the ideology of extremism. If we are going to—if we don't, we will find ourselves responding instead of having a long-term strategy.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. STEINBACH. Really quickly, sir? Can I make a comment to that really quickly?

Chairman MCCAUL. Please.

Mr. STEINBACH. So I think it is important to note that the subject-matter experts, whether you are talking about organized crime or terrorism, they are subject-matter experts. They—we spend a lot of time training towards, we hire towards subject-matter experts to understand. You have to be a subject-matter expert to engage in this fight. We have robust training programs that talk about the ideology, that talk about the background and the culture, the history of the radicalization and history of terrorism. So those programs, those training programs are in place, and they are very important for my folks, and I am sure the other agencies, to work the threat.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentleman.

The Chairman now recognizes the gentlemen from New Jersey, Mr. Payne.

Mr. PAYNE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and to the Ranking Member.

You know, a lot of this discussion today and over the past month or so has been very interesting to me. Here we are, a committee with the responsibility of making sure that the homeland remains safe. But yet and still—everyone talks about making sure that that happens, but there are a group in the Congress that are willing to play politics with this country's security.

You know, politics is part of what we do, but to pick Homeland Security in order to make your point is dangerous. I travel from my district in New Jersey, the 10th Congressional district, which takes in Newark, New Jersey, a tier-one target. Prudential Insurance Company was targeted several years ago, about a decade ago, for an attack.

If you go to Jersey City in my district, where I went on September 12 and saw the smoldering building from across the river—we cannot play games with the funding for this Department because of a policy that you don't agree with in the Executive branch. It makes no sense.

With that—oh, and let me just say, Mr. Chairman, I had come down from my district on the train Monday night, and in the train station there were DHS police officers, and I went over and spoke to them and thanked them for their service and the things they are doing for this country. They asked me to send a message back to Congress, and it was please give us the resources and the funding we need to do this job. Do not cut our legs from under us.

So, we can't continue saying we appreciate their service and work, but yet we will not give them the resources that they need to do the job. So, Under Secretary Taylor, you mentioned that not fully funding the Department of Homeland Security would have a crippling effect on domestic security.

Could you please explain how if the Department of Homeland Security is not provided with the full-year funding, efforts to prevent foreign fighters and their travel would be affected, since that seems to be a great concern on the other side, how not funding the Department will impact that ability?

Mr. TAYLOR. Sir, I think the point the Secretary has made and I have tried to make here today is that working under the CR limits our flexibility in investing in the threats as they evolve over time, and our grant funding, and our ability to respond—to add money to the Secret Service for additional protection, and those sorts of issues.

So, I can't speak specifically to a specific foreign fighter aspect, but in the day and age that we work and live from a security perspective, the Secretary believes very strongly that in order to protect the homeland, we need the flexibility to invest in the new threats as they are evolving. Under the current system, he doesn't have that flexibility to direct his forces to execute in that manner.

Mr. PAYNE. New funding for new programs?

Mr. TAYLOR. New funding for programs, funding for continuing grants, funding—

Mr. PAYNE. Two-point-six—two-point-six billion dollars in grant funding from what I am reading here.

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. PAYNE. You know, it just baffles me how we can almost, like, talk out of both sides of our mouths and say that we want to make sure that the homeland is safe, but because of an issue you have with the Executive branch, we are going to play games and say, well, you know, maybe we won't fund the Department of Homeland Security.

I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentleman from New York, Mr. Katko is recognized.

Mr. KATKO. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Steinbach, earlier you testified that the FBI did not have a process in place to vet and conduct background checks for Syrian refugees. What tools or capabilities would the FBI need to be able to conduct these checks?

Mr. STEINBACH. Sir, I didn't say we didn't have a process in place, I said that there was a lack of databases. So, we learned our lessons with the Iraqi refugee population. We put in place a USIC-wide background and vetting process that we found to be effective.

The difference is, in Iraq, we were there on the ground collecting, so we had databases to use. The concern is in Syria, the lack of our footprint on the ground in Syria, that the databases won't have the information we need. So, it is not that we have a lack of process, it is there is a lack of information.

Mr. KATKO. Is there ways that you could suggest we go about trying to get this information?

Mr. STEINBACH. I just don't think you can go and get it. You are talking about a country that is a failed state, that is—does not have any infrastructure so to speak, so you—all of the data sets, the police, the intel services that normally you would go and seek that information don't exist.

Mr. KATKO. That obviously raises a grave concern as to being able to do proper background checks of the individuals coming into the country.

Mr. STEINBACH. Yes.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. All right, now, Mr. Taylor, thank you for your testimony as well. As a Member of the—as the Chairman of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security I look forward to working with DHS and TSA on a regular basis moving forward to the mutual benefit of everyone.

A couple quick questions from your written submission, and it just—these real points of clarification for me so I can better understand the foreign fighter issue.

One of the things that you mention was that the Secretary Johnson has ordered—or is conducting an immediate short-term review to determine if additional security measures are necessary at both domestic and overseas last-point-of-departures.

What is the status of that review right now and when are we going to be able to get some information out on that?

Mr. TAYLOR. The schedule to brief the Secretary is this week by TSA. The idea behind this—the thing Secretary Johnson has charged us all with is thinking outside of the box.

Mr. KATKO. I like that.

Mr. TAYLOR. We apply security directives, we see the effect of those security directives every week when we have our counterterrorism meeting. His last question is: Are we thinking out of the box, and what else could we be doing to be more effective? That is what he has charged TSA to give him some ideas back that he will decide in terms of how those things might be better implemented to—across both domestically and internationally.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. So, that is a short-term, and—of course you will report to us at the appropriate time any suggestions—

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. KATKO [continuing]. That might be helpful.

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely.

Mr. KATKO. We appreciate that. You also noted that in the long term, you are exploring the possibility of expanding to pre-clearance operations.

Could you explain this a little bit more in detail why that would be beneficial?

Mr. TAYLOR. Well, simply put in a football analogy, we would rather play defense on their one-yard line than on our one-yard line, and right now, without pre-clearance, the clearance happens here in the United States and not at the overseas airport.

So, the extent to which we have pre-clearance agreements with governments across the country, we can put Homeland Security personnel in those airports, conduct the screening using our databases at their 1-yard line, and be more effective, we think, in preventing people from getting on airplanes, coming to our country. Rather than finding them here and having to send them back.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. Thank you for that.

Last, with respect to tracking the foreign fighters, there was a reference in your written report to enhancing or enabling of CBP to conduct security vetting of respective VWP travelers to determine if they have low—law enforcement security risk.

When you say enabling CBP, what do you mean by that? Is it something mandatory?

Mr. TAYLOR. We are really speaking to the expanding of ESTA and our ESTA data requirements, as one of the earlier Members asked, we have expanded that by six. We are looking at whether or not we should expand it even further so that we have better data upon which to vet against our databases.

Mr. KATKO. All right, so when you are—the term I was kind of hung up, maybe I am being my former prosecutor a little bit too much here, enabling the CBP to conduct security vetting.

I mean, I use the seed word enabling. Does that mean it is optional for them to do that, or is it—

Mr. TAYLOR. No, no, sir. It expands your capacity to do it with more data elements.

Mr. KATKO. It is part of the total mix of things they do when they screen someone?

Mr. TAYLOR. Yes, sir.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. All right. Thank you.

Mr. TAYLOR. I would add, sir, that every person that comes to the United States on an aircraft or ship is vetted against our holdings. There is no one that comes here that doesn't get that kind of

screening. It is the—whether it is a visa screening or an ESTA screening, that may be a bit different in terms of whether an interview is conducted and that sort of thing, but everyone gets screened against the databases that are available to our country.

Mr. KATKO. Okay. Thank you very much.

Chairman MCCAUL. Gentledady from New Jersey, Mrs. Watson Coleman is recognized.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and thank you Mr. Thompson. Gentlemen, I am sorry I wasn't here for the beginning of your testimony, but I spent my last night reading it, and I found it fascinating.

So, I want you to know that I am very appreciative of what each of your agencies is doing and attempting to do and identifying in terms of keeping us safe here. How you have expanded your interactions, and your information sharing, and your methodologies, and your creativity with other—places, including foreign countries so that we can all be safe.

That is very important to me. I am particularly struck by Homeland Security and I want to associate myself with Mr. Keating and Mr. Paine's remarks about our responsibility to ensure that as you are the protector of the homeland, that you have the resources necessary to be flexible, to be responsive, to be proactive, to do what you need to do to keep me safe without engaging in the political wranglings of whether or not we should be holding the President's foot to the fire on something that he did because Congress couldn't see fit to do.

But nonetheless, my question is more narrowed, and I think it is similar to Mr. Loudermilk's questioning. I am concerned about growing our terrorists here, taking who we think are everyday young people, having them exposed to the way these radical organizations use the social media and any other recruitment resources, and how—what is it that we can do to sort of cut it off at the pass?

What is it that we should be doing in terms of accessing young students, vulnerable college students? Are there resources that we should be putting in educating and counteracting some of this negative propaganda, this ideology-spewing that is taking place with—how do we help our communities and our families see signs?

Are there any commonalities of the characteristics of people that we have seen that seem to be most vulnerable that are home-grown, that seem most vulnerable to this radicalization? Can you share with me where you think our greatest threat is in terms of the security?

Is it on the Southern Border of the United States and Mexico? Is it some other borders that we are talking about? For someone like me, I consider myself Spongebob. I want to soak up as much information as I can get. I need to have a better understanding of those questions, and whoever is able to answer any part of it, I would be greatly appreciative.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. I will start, but any one of us can add pieces to this, ma'am.

You are absolutely right that the focus of—one of the focuses of our effort at the Federal level is to try to empower local communities to develop their own engagement or intervention strategies, because that is what it takes. There is not going to be a Federally-

led intervention in a particular family, or community, or social setting that is going to be the tipper that turns someone off from radicalization. It is that local community, the families, schools, churches, mosques, they are the ones who recognize behavioral changes at a point when behavior can be still addressed and potentially not end up at the worst-case scenario of a person actually having traveled overseas.

So the precisely the kind of information you are asking for is what we are trying to share in a series of community awareness briefings that give people, parents, schools, teachers the tools to say hey, this is what is happening, and now I have to do something about it.

Now the “do something about it” part is still very much has to be a community decision or a local decision. But the other frustrating piece, and it gets to the last part of your question, is that there isn’t a single place you can say, ah, we need to be worried about it here but not here.

Unlike some of our other previous foreign fighter flow episodes, like during the period when a large number of Americans were going to Somalia to participate in the fighting in east Africa, there you had a relatively defined set of communities where we had great concern because of the Somali-American population and their particular vulnerability to recruitment there.

Here, and I am sure Mike would echo this, we do not have a profile or a pattern that says, ah, in these communities yes, but in these communities we are okay. So what we are having to do is, we talked about it with Chairman earlier, is just scale up these efforts because the ISIL, the Iraq grounded propaganda is having a reach far beyond ethnicity. It is not Iraqi Americans or Syrian Americans, it is—it isn’t—it can’t be narrowed in that way, and that is a challenge and it is frustrating to us.

Mr. TAYLOR. Ma’am, I would add, and certainly associate myself with all of the comments that Nick has been made, we believe one of the empowering organizations is our fusion centers and training of our State and local police officers who are the first responders, who are going to be the first level of defense, if you will, in spotting some of this behavior in addition to what happens within the community awareness area.

So, it is a combination of empowering the community in terms of what to look for and having our police officers better understand this phenomenon and what they may see on the street on a day-to-day basis in their encounters with citizens. Community policing officers who are involved in day-to-day activities within communities across our country also need to have that kind of an understanding.

I think, Assistant Director Steinbach mentioned it, it is almost like the D.A.R.E. program, where you go to get to the basics of everybody understanding what the issue is and filling the knowledge base so that people when they see it, that is where, “See something, Say something” can really make a difference in identifying these sorts of issues before they become bigger problems.

Chairman MCCAUL. Thank you, gentlelady.

Mrs. WATSON COLEMAN. Thank you, Chairman.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentleman from Georgia, Mr. Carter is recognized.

Mr. CARTER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, gentlemen for being here and thank you for what you do to protect our homeland. We appreciate it very much.

Let me ask you—you know, this is the kind of report that you read through and you are concerned about everything, and not one thing more so than the other. But one of the things that struck me was about the foreign fighter travel. I just want to know what we can do to better control that. From what I understand, we are not using all of our resources. I don't know that the administration has even identified a lead agency to combat this. Is that true?

Mr. STEINBACH. No, I would say that is not true. So foreign fighter travel, travel to a conflict zone in support of foreign terrorist organization, is against the law. So the FBI has the lead on that.

The question is: When you look at the broken travel, as Mr. Hurd brought up earlier, when you look at the ways to—legitimate citizens traveling abroad is not something that we choose to curtail. So if you take travel to destinations like Europe, where you can then take—Schengen—down to Turkey.

So it is more about identifying the multitude of ways that these individuals in the United States are committed to travel using good investigative processes. Are they going up to Canada? Are they going down to Mexico? How are they getting to—how are they using lawful process, lawful ways to get to these locations?

So it is not a function of not having the tools. It is—you know, they are—they have just as much creativity as we do and they have got a lot of support. So they reach out on social media, on platforms, talk to people who have done it and made it, and then follow the travel routes.

So we have got to stay on top of that and use tripwires, the intelligence community, the 17,000 State and local and travel law enforcement agencies to develop an understanding of what the landscape is.

Mr. CARTER. So the message I am getting from you here today is that you feel like we have got that under control, or doing the best we can?

Mr. STEINBACH. We don't have it under control. Absolutely, we are doing the best we can. If I were to say that we had it under control, then I would say I know of every single individual traveling. I don't. I don't know every person there and I don't know everyone coming back. So it is not even close to being under control.

It continues to be a challenge. We have to creatively, as Frank said, think outside the box to figure out how to combat this. We spend a lot of time figuring this out, looking this over, trying to develop processes and databases, automated searches to work this problem.

Mr. CARTER. Okay. Let me switch here to a quick—and let's talk about the Visa Waiver program. As I understand it, there are certain people who are eligible for this and it is good for 90 days and it expires in 90 days?

Mr. TAYLOR. Actually, sir, the period of the ESTA approval can be upwards of 3 years, depending on the country. So once an ESTA

is submitted, then the period that that ESTA is valid can be between 1 and 3 years.

Mr. CARTER. But those countries that we are most concerned with, it is up to 90 days, generally?

Mr. TAYLOR. In terms of?

Mr. CARTER. In terms of the waiver.

Mr. TAYLOR. Right now, we have a Visa Waiver with 28 countries across the country—across the world. In each of those cases, we have a bilateral relationship with those countries about how we exchange data and for what purposes. More broadly, other countries have to get visas through the State Department for the purposes of traveling to—

Mr. CARTER. Okay, well, let me ask you this: What happens when it expires? Do we have someone who checks up on these people to make sure that they are not still here?

Mr. TAYLOR. Oh, absolutely. That is the job of our Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Part of being in the Visa Waiver program is the requirement that your visa overstays be somewhere in the less than 1 percent level. So we are pretty confident in the countries that we have Visa Waiver programs with that the level of this type of activity by their citizens in our country is minimal, compared to the level of activity that may be evident in other countries, where visa overstays are a bigger issue.

Mr. CARTER. Okay. Well, as I can imagine it, you have got a tickler file set up, and if somebody exceeds that 90 days and they haven't left—

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely.

Mr. CARTER [continuing]. Then you go looking for them?

Mr. TAYLOR. We have processes to try to make sure that those people who are in this country for longer than their visa period are tracked down and escorted away.

Mr. CARTER. Okay. Mr. Chairman, I yield the remaining time.

Chairman MCCAUL. I thank the gentlemen.

Chairman recognizes the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. Jackson Lee.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the Chairman—let me thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for this very important hearing. Let me state to the witnesses I was delayed because we were holding a crime subcommittee in Judiciary, of which I am the Ranking Member.

This is an extremely important hearing, and it is issued in the backdrop of several worthy comments. The President has now released his AUMF, which is a singular notice to the Congress of the importance of addressing the question of ISIS and the potential of the United States engaging in some form of military action to be able to secure this Nation.

I indicated in remarks earlier today on the floor that the Department of Homeland Security provides a domestic armor, a National armor of security. That is the responsibility of that. For many of us on this committee, we have had the privilege of serving since the horrendous and heinous act of 9/11.

Often, I make the comment, certainly not proudly, that I was on or at Ground Zero during the moments of the extended time of looking for remains. It will always be a potent and striking mo-

ment in my life, and I take seriously the responsibilities of this committee.

For that reason, I believe it is crucial that we do not hold hostage this Department. We have actually 7 days to make amends on the funding of the Department of the Homeland Security, and I remind my colleagues that the issue of unaccompanied children or the President's Executive Actions do not pose the kind of heinous threat that we are talking about today.

I frankly think this is an important discussion, and many front-line DHS employees will be, in essence, hindered from their work without the full funding of this committee.

I ask you Mr. Taylor, just a simple question, that in the midst of your jurisdiction and employees that you have under your jurisdiction, without funding for this Department, will some of them not be paid or some of them have to be furloughed, or some issue may come up regarding their service?

Mr. TAYLOR. Ma'am, we are in the process of reviewing the procedures for an orderly shut-down of the Department. I can't say specifically the number of people, since I—people who work for me are primarily in the National security arena and are exempt from this. But there will be an impact in terms of people who are not directly involved in National security.

Also, I would reinforce a comment I made earlier. There are going to be people who are working but not paid.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That is the point that I made. You didn't hear me say that.

Mr. TAYLOR. This is a morale challenge in a Department that is morale-challenged going forward. So—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. But the main point is, is that you are in the process of having that as a responsibility, which is surveying your Department and determining what will happen without the funding.

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. That is taking your attention away from important security issues of securing the Nation, which I assume—that is a statement that I believe is accurate. Is that not accurate?

Mr. TAYLOR. I am not personally involved, but our Departmental management folks are working—

Ms. JACKSON LEE. But that is staff persons dealing with those issues—

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE [continuing]. That would not ordinarily be dealing with them at this time.

Mr. TAYLOR. Absolutely.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me offer and pursue my questioning to make this point. I do want to offer sympathy. We have come to our attention that three members of a Muslim family were murdered in Chapel Hill. These were students at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. We understand the culprit was arrested and charged with first-degree murder and had some issues dealing with religious questions. One of the individuals was, in fact, speaking against the murder of people, meaning one of the Muslim students was speaking against that.

Let me go straight to the gentleman from the FBI and ask the question regarding cyber and the internet and soliciting and what counter, in terms of ideology, can be best used to fight this. We can fight with arms. We can fight with intelligence. But are there other ways of stopping or getting in the way of the solicitation of our young people?

Mr. STEINBACH. Absolutely, ma'am. I think there are a variety of ways, both methods we can talk about in open session, as well information we can talk about behind closed doors in a Classified setting.

I think it starts to go back—we have to understand the path to radicalization and mobilization. It starts with intellectual curiosity at some point, and there are lots of community-based efforts that can be made to turn people away.

Once an individual gets to the point where he or she has an intent to conduct an attack, then it turns into an enforcement or a disruption piece. All along that spectrum, all the way through disruption, there are efforts that can be made both from a counter-radicalization narrative, both from a disruptive and an intervention perspective—and it is a multi-pronged approach that involves the State Department and the counter-messaging piece. It involves a community-based counter-radicalization piece. Of course, it involves the use of tripwires and disruption to prevent acts of terrorism. So it is a wide-spread approach that we have to utilize all of those.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Well let me just say that I hope that this committee, that we have overlapping jurisdiction, will ramp up the dollars that will intervene in that radical heinous ideology.

I consider ISIS barbaric. Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, I do want to offer my deepest sympathy to the family of Kayla Mueller, who was in the truest sense a great American, who wanted to do nothing more than to help people who were in need. To be targeted by the heinous violence of ISIS—this committee's hearing is important.

The violence in this committee—excuse me, in this—not in this committee, in this Nation that warranted and brought about the death of three Muslim students or individuals in North Carolina—none of this should be tolerated. However we can disrupt and interrupt this, I think it requires all of our resources, working together in bipartisan, funding the DHS, to be able to make a difference.

I, for one, would like to be engaged in the writing of the legislation and/or to find out more in an instructive manner, how do we stop the radicalization of our young people for something as heinous as what ISIS represents.

My final word, Mr. Chairman, is to thank King Abdullah and Jordan for their committed work, along with our allies, on this effort. My sympathy to them for the losses that they have experienced throughout the Mideast and throughout Europe.

With that, I yield back my time.

Chairman MCCAUL. Gentlelady's time has experienced. The gentlelady from Arizona, Ms. McSally, is recognized.

Ms. MCSALLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, gentlemen, for your testimony here and—try and look at you while I am talking here with my colleague in the way.

So I appreciate your work that you have been doing. I was 26 years in the military and worked especially, Director Rasmussen, with your organization, and my last assignment at U.S. Africa Command running current operations there to include our counter-terrorism operations.

I am aware you all have been dealing with the foreign fighter issue long before a lot of people are now paying attention to it. But we were watching it even back then, 2007 to 2010, where we had foreign fighters flowing from many places but into areas for al-Shabaab training camps and AQAP and AQIM, North Africa, any of these ungoverned spaces, as you know.

I will say as someone in the military, it caused great frustration as much as what we have been talking about today is mostly on the defense, to your terminology. But in order to address this, it needs to be a comprehensive whole-of-Government approach, for sure. But I sure would prefer to be on the offense primarily, and that includes going after these people that have, you know, decided to become enemy combatants in a generational struggle against us, as well as going after the core ideology.

So at the Unclassified level—I mean, you know this. We watched thousands of foreign fighters graduate from these training camps because, quite frankly, we didn't have the political will to do anything about it on the offense at the time, not thinking it was within our interest or it wasn't a threat to our country. God knows where those thousands of jihadists who graduated from these training camps all over Africa—where they are now. I mean, who knows where they are today?

But we just watched them. We let them go. We did nothing about it. Where we had tremendous opportunity to do some things, we just didn't do it. So we have been focusing on the foreign fighter problem with ISIS, but I do want you to comment on your perspective of the foreign fighter problem in other ungoverned areas that we can't forget about, to include many of them in Africa. I would just like your perspectives on what we are seeing through there.

Mr. RASMUSSEN. Thank you. As I talked about in my testimony, the thing that is an order of magnitude different about the foreign fighter phenomenon in this current conflict is the scale. But you are absolutely right. This is not a phenomenon that was invented yesterday. Individuals interested in flowing to conflict zones to participate in conflict there is something we have been watching through a series of conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa.

The kind of unifying theme in these areas is lack of governance, and so we are left, in a sense, sitting on the outside, trying to intervene using all of the tools available, but no one tool itself being adequate to the task of reaching into North Africa, whether that is a Mali or a Libya or a Somalia, and reaching in and being able to affect the dynamic that those foreign fighters are moving into, is a challenge that we do not have our arms completely around yet.

We are particularly challenged in some of these areas because of an intelligence deficit, where our ability to collect intelligence that gives us a really, really good picture of who the individuals of greatest concern are. As you know, that is where we try to spend most of our effort, is trying to determine who those individuals are that actually are engaged in plotting against our interests because

there is obviously a huge population of individuals who are there to participate in localized conflict so we can't devote all of our resources to understanding that picture.

I guess the last thing I would say is that particularly concerning about the ISIL phenomenon is that ISIL has now decided it needs to move beyond Syria and Iraq. So you have extremist organizations in North Africa, Algeria, in Egypt, in Libya, who now have raised the flag of ISIL and claimed affiliate status.

Again, that creates a sense of momentum and competition among extremist jihadist groups that ultimately adds to our threat concerns, doesn't subtract. Even though you like to see your enemies fighting amongst each other, but actually, it is creating competition against each—amongst each other as they try to one-up each other in efforts to go after us.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thank you. The next question—I have just a little bit of time here left—is—I know you talked about some community engagement, but you know, this is an Islamic extremist problem. So what in particular is the engagement with the Muslim community in America, the Muslim leaders? Where are you seeing that there are obstacles to having them admit that this is a problem of an extremist portion of their religion, and they need to get on board in order to stop it?

Mr. TAYLOR. Ma'am, I would say that within the Muslim communities around our country, they are concerned, as are all Americans, about this kind of behavior among people within their community, and they want to address it. They want to understand it better and to have the tools to address it.

I have noted—I have been out with the Secretary on a couple of these. There are concerns about discrimination on the part of those communities and how they are treated in certain other ways, but there is no lack of commitment in those communities to get at extremism among their children, among people in those communities, because they see that as inconsistent with their responsibilities of being Americans and living the American dream in our country.

So I have noted—I don't think we have noted a major lack of effort among those communities to recognize this phenomenon and how it impacts those communities and not wanting the tools to help them address them proactively.

Ms. MCSALLY. Great. Thanks.

My time has expired. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman MCCAUL. Chairman recognizes the gentlelady from California, Mrs. Torres.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. I apologize to the panel for giving you my back, but unfortunate circumstances of seating arrangements—I would like to go back to the question that was asked by Ranking Member Thompson for you, Under Secretary Taylor. Without a full year funding bill, the Department of Homeland Security cannot award, it was my understanding, \$2.6 billion, correct? Billion dollars.

Mr. TAYLOR. Billion.

Mrs. TORRES. Billion in grant funding, much of which goes to State and local departments. Having served both at the local level as a council member/mayor, and having served as a State senator

in the State of California, you know, these agencies are just beginning to recover from this great recession that we have had. They certainly do not have the funding to back-bill what we do not send to them, and they are dependent on this funding in order to help protect our communities.

So what do you think is the risk assessment as it relates to these agencies not being able to pick up the phone and have someone on the other side answer to get feedback on a potential threat risk?

Mr. TAYLOR. Ma'am, I can't speak to the specific risk. What I can speak to is the fact that grant funding and our investment in State and local community engagement efforts is a linchpin for how we have structured our country to do homeland security.

We believe everyone needs to be in the game. Everyone needs to be empowered to understand what the risk is, what the tactics, techniques, and procedures are that they should be looking for and to share that information with the FBI, with the IC so that we can engage before the act happens. So the extent to which these grants make those agencies less effective in meeting that responsibility presents a risk for us.

Mrs. TORRES. Would you consider that a low-risk, a high-risk, in the—as it relates to not just the agencies, but—I am sorry, not just as it relates to the local agencies, but the inability of the FBI or the inability of other departments to be able to coordinate and communicate with these agencies?

Mr. TAYLOR. As I said, ma'am, we have built our homeland security enterprise based on a State, local, Federal model, and any capability that is taken away from that in some way diminishes our capacity to address the risks that we are concerned with in our country.

Mrs. TORRES. Thank you. I yield my time back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The Chairman recognizes the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Ratcliffe.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Gentlemen, I have very much enjoyed and appreciated your testimony today. As a former terrorism prosecutor and as a former United States attorney, I have had the good fortune to work with each of your agencies before on a number of occasions, and I very much look forward to the opportunity to do so again as a Member of this committee.

Mr. Steinbach, I would like to start with you. Your boss, director of the FBI Jim Comey recently expressed concern about technology companies using encryption methods on mobile devices, specifically in response to an Apple representative's statement that it would no longer be possible to unlock encrypted iPhones and iPads. Director Comey drew an analogy to child kidnappers, and he said, "The notion that someone would market a closet that could never be opened, even if it involves a case involving a child kidnapper and a court order, to me, that does not make any sense."

As a former terrorism prosecutor, I share Director Comey's concern and can certainly see how the inability to access encrypted devices would hamper terrorism investigations. So my question is: What is the FBI's plan to deal with this? Have you engaged the technology industry to address these concerns?

Mr. STEINBACH. First of all, sir, I am certainly not going to argue with Director Comey, so he is, of course, right. It is a concern. I think, quite frankly, it is irresponsible for companies to build products, have software updates that allow for no lawful capability to unlock their devices.

So to make the argument that it is on the cloud and so you don't need to have access to the device itself is disingenuous because, as we know, not all of the information is on the cloud. We have to have the ability, whether we are talking about gangsters or organized crime or terrorists, with lawful abilities, court orders to look into and take content, store communications, whether it is a child pedophile, whether it is somebody involved in narcotics trade or somebody trying to conduct a terrorist act. We have to have that ability.

So we have put this message out. I know that the director and his staff have gone out and relayed this message on numerous occasions. We have pushed it out. We have had interaction with the State, local, and Federal levels of law enforcement, as well as had direct contact with those companies and tried to explain to them through use of examples that this is a dangerous precedent to go down, to not have the ability at any means—whether it is an ongoing kidnapping or some other event, not to have the ability to get in there and look at that content or that stored communication.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Terrific. Thanks very much. I am going to throw this question out to anyone on the panel that wants to take it. There are numerous reports out there that Ask.fm is one of the common recruitment channels through which a number of American foreign fighters have formed close relations with ISIS recruiters. We talked today about the teenage girls from Denver. Since Ask.fm is operating out of Latvia, I would like to know whether there has been any interaction between the State Department and/or law enforcement with the Latvian government regarding this?

Mr. STEINBACH. So I can't speak to specific interaction between the State Department and the Latvian government. I will tell you that Ask.fm is but one of many social media companies that we have seen in our intelligence collection efforts USIC-wide that is being used. It is just one. There are many other platforms that reside overseas that, again, like I said earlier, have shown an unwillingness to work with either our government or the host governments.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Terrific. Last question. I apologize if this has been covered earlier. I have been in and out of other hearings today. But when ISIS-specific material is posted on Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, YouTube, what are the existing lines of communication between law enforcement and those entities to either provide notice or to facilitate the removal of that material?

Mr. STEINBACH. So the companies themselves have terms of service agreements that in many cases, violence, criminal acts, violate those terms of service agreements, and as I understand, they have got automated processes, once they see that, to take those down.

We are not looking at it from a terms of service agreement, of course. We are looking at it from the threat. So when we identify a communication, a radicalization node or some other piece that is being used, we look to, quite frankly, exploit that node and do that

through lawful means, whether it is collecting the information to see what they are communicating about or to look at on-going communications.

So we have an overlapping, I guess, mission when compared to some of these companies, but at the end of the day, the result should be the same. We want to stop the communication through various social media and internet platforms.

Mr. RATCLIFFE. Terrific. My time is expired. Again, I appreciate all of you being here.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. We thank the witnesses for being here today. This is a very important topic to our National security. I want to thank all three of you for your service to the American people to keep Americans safe. I want to thank also the rank and file within the Department of Homeland Security, NCTC, and the FBI for the job that they do day in and day out without much recognition. But they are truly the patriots of this country. Just on behalf of this committee, we want to say thank you.

The hearing record will be open for 10 days for additional questioning. Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:43 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

