

S. Hrg. 117–563

**VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM:
EXAMINING THE THREAT TO HOUSES OF
WORSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACES**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

MARCH 16, 2022

Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs



U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

49–911 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2025

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VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: EXAMINING THE THREAT TO HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACES

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 16, 2022

U.S. SENATE,
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:15 a.m., via Webex and in room SD-342, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Gary Peters, Chairman of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Peters, Carper, Hassan, Rosen, Padilla, Ossoff, Portman, Johnson, Lankford, Scott, and Hawley.

OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETERS¹

Chairman PETERS. The Committee will come to order.

In recent years, we have seen an unacceptable number of violent threats, and deadly attacks, on some of our most vulnerable public places in communities all across the country. These targets have included spaces where Americans are going about their daily lives, and where they should have no reason to fear for their safety. Places like shopping centers, entertainment venues, schools, and frequently, houses of worship, including synagogues, churches, and mosques.

Last month, a man attempted to start a fire at the Al-Huda Islamic Center in Dearborn, Michigan, and few weeks before that, an armed British citizen held hostages for 11 hours at Congregation Beth Israel, a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas.

These are two recent incidents after years and years of attacks, from attempted arsons to deadly shootings, at synagogues, African American churches, mosques and gurdwaras across our Nation.

These insidious, hateful attacks not only take lives and cause physical injuries, they also destroy sacred property and leave deep traumatic scars on entire communities.

Everyone across this nation deserves to feel safe where they live, where they work, and where they pray. That is why resources, like those provided by the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), are so important to keeping our communities safe and secure from these attacks. This program provides grants to faith-based and nonprofit organizations to help secure their facilities and fund training and resources to protect congregations from these threats.

¹ The prepared statement of Senator Peters appear in the Appendix on page 39.

I have long fought to increase the resources available to non-profits and houses of worship who are looking to strengthen their security, and I was proud to work alongside Senator Portman last Congress to lead the authorization of this vital program. I look forward to continuing our work together to strengthen and expand the resources available for this high-demand program, to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of our religious communities.

Although this important program is available to many organizations, it is all too clear that the evolving threats to our homeland security are targeting many other public spaces.

We have seen pervasive threats and devastating attacks wherever people gather, from the Pulse nightclub attack to the shooting at the Walmart in El Paso, Texas, and more recently during the nationwide bomb threats targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU). These diffuse and rising threats raise serious questions about the rapidly evolving landscape of homeland security threats that communities across the country are facing, and how Federal agencies can better address these to protect Americans as they go about their daily lives.

Increasingly, lone offenders and small cells, who are often motivated by personal grievances or ideological beliefs, present the most lethal threat to the homeland. Many of them are radicalized online, through conspiracies, misinformation, and disinformation that merge to create a volatile environment and the potential for real-world violence.

To effectively address these threats, we rely on the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and DHS components, including the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, as well as State and local partners, to respond and disseminate information to our communities to better protect people.

I look forward to today's discussion about what more Congress and our national security agencies can do to tackle this rapidly shifting threat environment and keep all Americans safe.

Ranking Member Portman, you are recognized for his opening remarks.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PORTMAN¹

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses for being here. I look forward to hearing from you.

This is another important hearing we are having to discuss the elevated threat of violence and terrorism against our houses of worship. Over two months ago, a terrorist made his way into Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, and held four people hostage for over 10 hours. The perpetrator, Malik Faisal Akram, traveled to the United States from the United Kingdom (UK) with the intent to commit violence.

I am concerned that this attack was not prevented. Why was this person not on the government's radar, considering his criminal record and history of being investigated for terrorism in the United Kingdom? Why was he granted access to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), especially after he lied on his pa-

¹The prepared statement of Senator Portman appears in the Appendix on page 41.

perwork to Customs and Border Protection (CBP)? In spite of his dangerous past, he was able to travel to the United States, fly from New York to Texas, illegally purchase a firearm. It was only after he attacked a synagogue that our law enforcement or homeland security officials detected the threat.

The incident in Colleyville was a blatant act of antisemitism and terrorism against the Jewish community. For too long, Jews in the United States have been targeted and attacked for their faith, facing threats of harassment and violence at an exceptionally high rate. The Jewish community is the target now of more than half of all religious-based crimes, and yet the community only makes up two percent of the U.S. population.

The antisemitic violence has taken the lives of too many people. In 2019, one person was killed and three were injured at the horrific attack against the Chabad of Poway in California. In 2018, 11 congregants were killed and six were injured at the Tree of Life synagogue outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the last five years, antisemitic incidents across the country have nearly doubled.

Threats of violence go beyond just targeting the Jewish community. I often hear from faith leaders in Ohio that the Christian, Muslim, and Sikh communities continue to face threats of terrorism and violence. According to the Global Terrorism Database (GTD), terrorist attacks against religious institutions accounted for over 25 percent of all terrorist attacks within the United States between 2009 and 2019. That statistic is deeply troubling and threatens our First Amendment right to freedom of religion.

Terrorists and extremists often target crowded spaces with little or no security. Three years ago, an assailant with white supremacist views, targeting the Mexican community, opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas, killing 23 and injuring 24. The following night, an assailant with extremist left-wing views killed nine and injured 27 on a busy Dayton street, in my home State of Ohio.

After seeing the devastating effects of terrorism across our houses of worship and communities, we are fortunate that the attack on the Beth Israel Congregation this January did not end in the loss of innocent life. While the ultimate goal is to prevent these attacks from happening in the first place, this incident showed us how preparedness and security can prevent violent attacks from escalating to lethal ones.

In particular, Congregation Beth Israel was a recipient of FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program. This program funded the synagogue's camera system, among other things, and improved the facility's overall security and provided first responders with situational awareness during the standoff. There was also training provided.

I have been a longtime supporter of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. In 2019, I authored its first authorization, working with the Chairman and others, working to expand it to all 50 States. I have also worked to double the funds from \$90 million to \$180 million. In January, I led a letter to the Appropriations Committee for increasing funding to a level that reflects the growing terrorist threat to nonprofits and houses of worship. Last week, I was

pleased that Congress appropriated \$250 million to the program for fiscal year (FY) 2022. It is an increase that unfortunately is needed.

In addition to the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, who was a hostage in Colleyville, has credited security workshops and training sessions by Federal and local law enforcement and nonprofits for providing the knowledge that saved his life. Unfortunately, many religious communities still do not know how to access these trainings or grants available through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program. We need to do better.

That is why last year I introduced the bipartisan Pray Safe Act with Senators Hassan, who is here today, Senator Peters, Senator Johnson, Senator Rosen, and Senator Rounds. The Pray Safe Act directs the Federal Government to establish a centralized clearinghouse of safety and security best practices, training opportunities, grant application information, and other assistance, all dedicated toward the simple goal of securing houses of worship against terrorism and violence. In the aftermath of the Colleyville attack, it is more necessary than ever that Congress quickly passes this legislation.

We called conferences in Ohio where we bring in the FBI and bring in Homeland Security to make sure that people understand what is available to them, and it is amazing the uptake. When houses of worship understand what they can have access to, including best practices, simple things, how to make their houses of worship more secure, they respond.

As we work to prevent violent incidents from occurring we must acknowledge that religious communities and other targets of terrorism are threatened by actors that hold a variety of ideological belief systems and motivations. We cannot lose sight of the fact that there are concerning trends and threats posed by both homegrown and international terrorists.

Again, I thank the witnesses for coming today. I look forward to your testimony and to your commitment to keeping Americans safe.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Ranking Member Portman.

It is the practice of the Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee (HSGAC) to swear in witnesses, so if each of you will stand and raise your right hand, including those who are joining us by video.

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

Mr. YOUNG. I do.

Ms. DOBITSCH. I do.

Mr. LOGAN. I do.

Mr. COLEMAN. I do.

Chairman PETERS. I heard affirmative from all of you. You may be seated.

Our first witness today is Ryan Young. Mr. Young is Executive Assistant Director of the Intelligence Branch (IB) at the FBI. In his current role he is the strategic leader of the FBI's intelligence program and external partnerships, overseeing the Bureau's intelligence strategy, resources, policies, and functions.

Mr. Young has over two decades of experience at the FBI, and most recently served as Assistant Director of the Directorate of Intelligence, where he helped manage the directorate with the authority and responsibility of all FBI intelligence operations.

Mr. Young, welcome to the Committee. You may proceed with your opening remarks.

TESTIMONY OF RYAN T. YOUNG,¹ EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, INTELLIGENCE BRANCH, FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

Mr. YOUNG. Good morning, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today and to discuss current threats to the houses of worship and other public spaces here in the United States.

In these uncertain times, the FBI needs the support and confidence of the American people to secure public spaces where Americans gather every day. The FBI's partnership with the affected communities are critical to both perceived threat information and to provide training on preventative measures. The FBI directly reaches out to various groups to hear their concerns, build cultural understanding, and foster trust.

FBI headquarters divisions and field offices across the Nation have strong community outreach and work with minority groups, academic institutions, religious, civic, and nonprofit organizations toward crime prevention. The FBI also recognizes that hate crimes remain a concern for communities across the country, and collects mandatory reporting from Federal law enforcement agencies. Reporting remains voluntary for State, local, tribal and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement agencies. The FBI has hate statistics from 2020. However, reporting from 2021 will not be available until the fall.

Additionally, the FBI created a Multi-Cultural Engagement Council (MCEC), composed of ethnic, religious, and minority leaders to both better understand and devise solutions to support these communities.

The FBI's outreach efforts are dedicated to helping individuals and families stay safe, protect houses of worship, fortify academic institutions and workplaces against violent rampages, and raise public awareness to potential acts of terrorism and extremism.

Another area that the FBI is focusing on is transnational repression. Emigré communities are victims of harassment, stalked, assault, or coerced in any way, especially by foreign governments. This is a violation of their individual rights and freedoms. The FBI has more information about transnational repressions on our FBI.gov site, which also houses the Threat Intimidation Guide (TIG), that has been translated into 28 languages.

Our Office of the Private Sector's (OPS) essential function is to strengthen the FBI relationships with private industry and academia to protect the nation's economy and national security. OPS builds trust among FBI and its partnerships by facilitating the FBI voice and providing consistent points of contact to promote mean-

¹ The prepared statement of Mr. Young appears in the Appendix on page 44.

ingful dialog. OPS works closely with operational divisions to communicate threats across different industries, sectors, companies, and public spaces.

In the past month, in response to numerous bomb threats targeting the Historically Black Colleges and Universities, OPS partnered with Office of Partner Engagement (OPE) and DHS to host the first of several calls with HBCUs across the country. Approximately 1,400 participants were on the first call, and we provided a situational update, points of contact to report additional threats, and resources available to the academic institutions.

Although outreach with houses of worship and faith-based communities falls under the purview of our Office of Public Affairs (OPA), our Office of Partner Engagement may change relationships with the security elements in the faith-based communities. OPE works with the faith-based communities on safety, initiatives, and order to ensure coordination on matters pertaining to houses of worship.

The FBI created the internal working group consisting of OPA, our Criminal Investigative Divisions (CID), and others. The creation of the working group directly led to Director Wray hosting two calls with approximately 30 faith-based leaders nationwide.

The recent incidents involving the Colleyville hostage crisis and the threats to HBCUs underscores the importance of having strong relationships before a crisis. As part of the FBI's response, OPA was able to quickly contact local faith leaders, minority and academic HBCU connections, because the FBI had pre-existing patterns of engagement, established by our community outreach specialist.

In January 2022, OPA and OPE met with U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and also conducted a partner call with the Congregation of Beth Israel to discuss related to their protection and security. In these discussions, FBI shared information about resources developed along with DHS, including detailed guidance and plans to respond to crises, such as active shooters and bomb threats.

In February 2022, OPA and OPS hosted a partner call about the bomb threats to the HBCUs with our national faith-based and minority partners. OPA provided FBI resources and active shooter training to help protect academic institutions. OPA also led the large webinar planned with the Church of God and Christ to discuss protection of houses of worship.

In closing, houses of worship and HBCUs, along with other public spaces where people gather require robust protection effort. The efforts require effective partnerships, and the FBI places a strong emphasis on partnering with community leaders to build trust and share relevant information to protect public spaces and fulfill our obligation to the American people.

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the FBI efforts to protect houses of worship. I appreciate your continued support and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Young.

Our next witness is Stephanie Dobitsch. Ms. Dobitsch is the Deputy Under Secretary for Intelligence Enterprise Operations the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (OIA) at DHS. In this role, she has guided a broad range of enduring initiatives, including a whole-of-government action to integrate and leverage the Department's unique data. She also oversees I&A's collection strategy and policies, reviews analysis and production of bulletins, and actively engages with internal and external partners on behalf of I&A.

Ms. Dobitsch has over a decade of Federal Government experience, serving in a variety of leadership, analytic, and policy assignments while supporting multiple departments and agencies.

Ms. Dobitsch, welcome to the Committee. You may proceed with your opening remarks.

TESTIMONY OF STEPHANIE DOBITSCH,¹ DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR INTELLIGENCE ENTERPRISE OPERATIONS, OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE AND ANALYSIS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and fellow Senators. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify today. I also want to thank the Chairman and his staff for quickly accommodating my virtual attendance today.

As many have said already, the United States remains in a heightened threat environment. This is due, in part, to the growing convergence of several factors that have increased the volatility, the unpredictability, and the complexity of the threats we face.

First, false and misleading narratives continue to be proliferated across social media and the internet, often with the intent to sow discord, promote violence, and undermine public trust in U.S. Government institutions.

Second, a range of threat actors continue to call for violence directed at U.S. critical infrastructure, soft targets and mass gatherings, faith-based institutions, institutions for higher education, racial and religious minorities, government facilities and personnel, the media, and perceived ideological opponents.

Third, foreign terrorist organizations remain committed to conducting and calling for attacks against the United States.

The most significant terrorism threat facing the United States today stems from lone offenders and small groups, including homegrown and domestic violent extremists (DVE) who are inspired by a broad range of ideological motivations and/or personal grievances, often fueled by mis- and disinformation on the internet.

The attack on the synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, demonstrates that we remain in a heightened threat environment as well as the persistent threat of violence faced by faith-based organizations from the full spectrum of threat actors.

The attack also marks a divergence in the type of recent activity we have seen surrounding religious institutions, in that the threat actor traveled from another country, held congregants hostage, and intended to use the hostage situation as leverage to release a convicted felon.

¹ The joint prepared statement of Ms. Dobitsch appears in the Appendix on page 49.

As Secretary Mayorkas has noted in several instances, DHS is a department of partnerships. This is the core of what we do, and DHS cannot be successful in countering these threats of terrorism or acts of violence without strong partnerships across the Federal Government and with the local communities that we serve.

DHS is working closely with State and local governments, industry, academia, faith-based partners to share information related to terrorism and targeted violence. The Department works closely with homeland security advisors in every State and territory to increase the resiliency and preparedness of our communities, and through our partnership with the national network of fusion centers. The Office of Intelligence and Analysis relies on its intelligence officers located across the Nation to share intelligence on threats to the homeland.

We remain omitted to working closely with our partners, including the sharing of timely and actionable information, and as the threat evolves so too will our efforts to address it.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Ms. Dobitsch.

Our next witness is Christopher Logan. Mr. Logan serves as the Deputy Assistant Administrator in the Grant Programs Directorate (GPD) at FEMA, and in this role Mr. Logan is responsible for agency-wide grants management policy, overseeing the agency's multi-billion-dollar preparedness grants portfolio.

Mr. Logan has over a decade of experience at FEMA where he has served in numerous senior roles, including as Deputy Assistant Administrator for Grant Programs, Director of Public Assistance, and Director of National Training and Education.

Mr. Logan, welcome to our Committee. You may proceed with your opening comments.

TESTIMONY OF CHRISTOPHER LOGAN,¹ DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, GRANT PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. LOGAN. Thank you, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, Members of the Committee. Good morning. My name is Christopher Logan. I serve as the Deputy Assistant Administrator for Grant Programs at the Federal Emergency Management Agency. On behalf of Secretary Mayorkas and Administrator Criswell thank you for the opportunity to discuss the critical role the Department of Homeland Security's grant programs serve in protecting the Nation, and particularly the nation's houses of worship and nonprofit organizations.

The Department's preparedness grant programs address the nation's immediate security needs. They enhance public safety, protect lives and property, and support the nation's response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic. Since 2003, Congress has appropriated, and the Department has administered, more than \$56 billion in preparedness grant funding to State, local, tribal, and territorial governments, the owners and operators of

¹ The joint prepared statement of Mr. Logan appears in the Appendix on page 49.

critical infrastructure, and nonprofit organizations. In the last year alone, we awarded more than \$2 billion in preparedness grant funds across nine programs, to improve the nation's ability to prevent, prepare for, protect against, and respond to terrorist attacks and other hazards.

Of particular importance to places of worship, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program provides funding to nonprofit organizations that are at a high risk of terrorist attack. From 2007 through 2021, the Department of Homeland Security awarded about \$594 million in funding to 6,500 nonprofit organizations through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

This competitive program provides up to \$450,000 to nonprofit organizations for training and physical security enhancements, including contract security, fencing, surveillance systems, access controls, and lighting. The program also is intended to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community organizations and with State and local government agencies.

As part of our effort to ensure that all nonprofit organizations in need of security resources have access to this funding, and in support of the President's Executive Order (EO) on advancing racial equity and support for underserved communities, FEMA is conducting extensive outreach to historically underserved and marginalized communities to provide information and technical assistance in preparing for the upcoming 2022 grant cycle.

In addition, we are identifying and addressing barriers to program participation, including a lack of awareness about the program, difficult and sometimes confusing application processes, administrative burdens, and uncertainty about eligibility and qualification requirements. Our analysis also is illuminating where grant dollars historically have not been awarded so that we can more effectively address the security needs of these underserved and marginalized communities.

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program is part of a suite of programs designed to build the capacity of our State, local, tribal, and territorial partners to prepare for terrorism. Recipients of these grants have regularly used the funding to better protect soft targets and crowded places, and, in fact, in 2021, Homeland Security grant recipients were required to spend at least five percent of their grant funding on projects that protect soft targets and crowded places.

This funding also has improved communication and coordination with the owners and operators of entertainment venues, shopping centers, large office buildings, and similar locations. In addition, between 2018 and 2020, States sub-awarded approximately \$38 million in Homeland Security funding to colleges and universities to address their specific security needs.

The recent hostage situation at the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, underscores the importance of these programs and particularly the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, in protecting houses of worship and public spaces from terrorists and domestic violent extremists.

Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Portman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the assist-

ance provided through the Department's preparedness grant programs, and particularly the assistance that supports the nation's houses of worship and nonprofit organizations. I am happy to respond to any questions that you might have.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Logan.

Our final witness is Marcus Coleman. Mr. Coleman serves as the Director of the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at DHS, where he leads efforts to foster partnerships between government and faith-based organizations.

Mr. Coleman joined FEMA in 2010, as a Program Manager for the Individual and Community Preparedness Division (ICPD), then served at the DHS Partnership Division, where he supported more than 15 disaster activations, including responding to Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma, and Hurricane Maria, and several active shooter incidents.

Mr. Coleman, welcome to our Committee. You may proceed with your opening remarks.

TESTIMONY OF MARCUS COLEMAN,¹ DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. COLEMAN. Good morning, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee. My name is Marcus Tillman Coleman, Jr. I serve as the Director for the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships at the Department of Homeland Security. I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the role the DHS plays to foster partnerships that improve the safety and security for places of worship, nonprofits, and other public spaces.

The DHS Center carries out the policies and program priorities of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency, related to all hazards and looking at all aspects of preparedness, mitigation, emergency disaster response recovery, and combating human trafficking.

Originally established in 2006, the DHS Center has a focus on the vital role faith-based and community-based organizations play in emergency management and in promoting safety and security in the places that people worship, fellowship, and serve. The DHS intercollaborates with our Federal interagency partners through research, outreach, building partnerships and capacity-building across a diverse network of faith-based and community-based leaders, alongside our colleagues at the Federal, State, local, tribal, and territorial level, and our first responders and partners from the private sector.

The DHS Center provides opportunities for listening and learning from faith-based and community leaders and local first responders as well. This dialog focuses on what works at the local level and where government can be more helpful in communication, capacity-building, and as partners to reaffirm our commitment to safeguard faith communities and persons at risk of discrimination, harassment, and hate-based acts of violence and vandalism.

¹ The joint prepared statement of Mr. Coleman appears in the Appendix on page 49.

The top priority for the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships is to support and bolster a whole-of-government and whole-community approach to increasing the safety and security of places of worship and community spaces. In 2021 alone, the center partnered across the Federal family to reach more than 6,000 faith-based and community leaders.

One example of some national-level engagements occurred in August 2021, on the topic of preventing targeted violence and protecting safety and security for houses of worship, where the center features voices and perspectives of a wide variety of faith-based leaders, including the Sikh Coalition, the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, and Secure Community Network (SCN). More than 2,000 registered to participate in that engagement to provide, and also to learn about steps to improve their safety and security of their facilities and the many spaces where people meet alongside local and first responders.

In addition to this effort, the center continues to partner with the Department of Homeland Security, Department of Justice (DOJ), and others to ensure participants receive actionable and practical information or addressing their questions, including how to apply for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

Additionally, the center continues to partner with various other components to facilitate timely outreach and respond to invitations from faith-based and community-based organizations seeking technical assistance and providing that technical assistance through webinars for the fiscal year 2022 Nonprofit Security Grant cycle.

The center remains focused on working with communities of diverse faiths, backgrounds, and experiences to prevent, respond to, and be resilient against such acts of violence, whether they are spurred by ideologies of hate, false narratives, or otherwise.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to answering your questions.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Mr. Coleman.

Before I begin questioning I would like to note that the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), the Sikh Coalition, and the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) have submitted statements for the record¹ for today's hearing. I think I speak for all Committee members. I appreciate the important work that they do on a daily basis to highlight the threats faced by houses of worship and public spaces nationwide to support the communities as they deal with these threats.

I would ask for unanimous consent (UC) that these statements be entered into the record. Hearing no objection, they will be entered into the record.

Certainly one of the greatest challenges that we confront are lone actors who are being radicalized online and then commit acts of violence in our communities. My first question is to Mr. Young. Mr. Young, how does the FBI determine whether an individual making alarming comments online presents an imminent threat of violence in the real world? If you could tell the Committee how are decisions made by the FBI to interdict in such a scenario.

¹ The statements submitted for the Record appears in the Appendix on page 89.

Mr. YOUNG. Good morning again. Let me note from the beginning that counterterrorism is our highest priority, seconding the point that lone actors do present, from the home-grown to the domestic violent extremists, present the hardest and most difficult task for us in identifying.

The key, though, is we do rely on the more than 5,000 tips we get a day in identifying, anybody that sees something, say something. And really where we draw the line is at violence and threats. There is a lot of free speech out there. We are in the business of revealing speech and dialog, or different ideologies, but when people cross the line to threats of violence, we go through an assessment and look to determine if it warrants further predication for an investigation.

Chairman PETERS. Does the FBI have necessary tools and authorities to track these types of individuals, in your opinion, and also if you could let the Committee know how you balance the individual's First Amendment rights versus the need to protect the public.

Mr. YOUNG. Based upon the review, especially in our domestic terrorism front, not only are any matters reviewed for meeting legal standards, that it has to be more than just ideology. It has to be crossing the line to threats and violence.

When it comes to tools, one of our strongest tools is our Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). Across our 56 offices, every office has a Joint Terrorism Task Force comprised of Federal, local, and State partners, and where we can share information and engage with the communities.

When it comes to tools, we start with the lowest level of intrusion, and based upon the severity of the threat we increase our investigative methods to ensure that we disrupt attacks or any of those vulnerabilities before they happen.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you.

Certainly the current threat environment for houses of worship and religious nonprofits and community gathering spaces is extremely complex. Ms. Dobitsch, in your opinion what is the greatest threat to these community spaces?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, Chairman Peters. As we continue to discuss throughout this hearing today, obviously the greatest threat we see comes from lone offenders and small groups, again, inspired by the full range of domestic and foreign violent ideologies and personal grievances.

The faith-based community continues to face an enduring threat, both from domestic and foreign violent extremists. The greatest threat really stems from racially and ethnically motivated violent extremists who believe in the superiority of the white race, militia violent extremists, and individuals who are inspired by foreign terrorist groups overseas.

In looking back over the last 10 years, we have observed about 30 incidents of domestic violent extremists targeting mosques, synagogues, churches, and other religious centers and institutions. Jewish communities were targeted nearly twice as often as other religious communities, followed by Muslim, Christian, and Sikh communities.

The most common weapons in these attacks or these plots was arson and then firearms. The use of arson, in particular, is more common in the targeting of faith-based communities compared to other targets perceived by domestic violent extremists.

To underscore again, really the threat to faith-based communities, in particular, spans the ideological spectrum, and we see them as a target of multiple groups and individuals seeking to target those communities.

Chairman PETERS. Ms. Dobitsch, a follow-up question. The folks who respond to these threats and these attacks are local law enforcement. The question for you is how does I&A make sure that both our State and local law enforcement are getting the information that you are collecting through your work, so that they can do their job protecting their local communities?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you for the question. First and foremost I&A seeks to produce intelligence and information at the lowest classification possible, so that it can reach the broadest spectrum of homeland security stakeholders including our faith-based communities and organizations.

We have also increased our direct engagement and outreach with faith-based organizations and State and local partners to have ongoing and regular dialog about the threats they face. Then ensuring that they have ready and quick access to any threats associated with these communities, or broader threats, we help to facilitate access to clearances and information on the Department's Homeland Security Information Network Critical Infrastructure Portal (HSIN-CI), where I&A's intelligence assessments and information are disseminated.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you. FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program is, as we are talking about today, is the critical source of funding for houses of worship and other community organizations at risk of these terrorist attacks. We recently passed an omnibus that contained \$250 million for the program.

My question for you, Mr. Logan, is how will FEMA ensure that next year's grants reach more diverse and more underserved communities?

Mr. LOGAN. Thank you for that question, Mr. Chairman. Over the past year we have engaged in a significant outreach effort with nonprofit and faith-based community in partnership with Marcus Coleman's office and national organizations. We have participated in more than 37 virtual outreach sessions that have reached 7,800 individuals representing more than 2,700 different organizations. Those webinars, that outreach, continues. In fact, we have a webinar scheduled for later this afternoon with the nonprofit community. As we move into the application period, which will begin shortly, we will continue those outreach efforts to help organizations understand how to apply, understand what good applications look like.

We know that there are parts of the country, there are particular communities that have not accessed this program. Our analysis has shown that it is not simply a matter of them being noncompetitive. It is that they are not competing at all, and we need to solve that problem.

We are looking, as I said in my testimony, at some of the barriers to participation to see where we can help organizations more easily access this program, sir.

Chairman PETERS. It is critical you do that so thank you for those efforts.

Ranking Member Portman, you are recognized for your questions.

Senator PORTMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Colleyville incident highlights, obviously, the dangers of allowing unvetted individuals with terrorist motivations into our country. I have had a serious concern about the Afghan evacuees, as some of you know, for some time. I do not think they have been adequately vetted or tracked.

Unfortunately, this concern was confirmed in a Department of Defense (DOD) Inspector General (IG) report that came out recently, that said that the Department of Homeland Security, who are here today, failed to use Department of Defense information collected from the battlefield, that included such things as fingerprints of terrorist involved in planting bombs. DOD checked the records after DHS paroled evacuees into the United States and flagged that at least 50 evacuees have what they considered a significant security problem. Most of these flagged evacuees could not be located due to DHS failing to update their location fields in their records.

I would ask unanimous consent, Mr. Chairman, to place this report into the hearing record.¹

Chairman PETERS. Without objection.

Senator PORTMAN. Given the stated goals of al-Qaeda and ISIS-K, based on Afghanistan, I am concerned about the threats to our homeland security this failure has introduced, not only to our public spaces but to our houses of worship we are talking about today.

Mr. Young, what is the FBI doing to locate these evacuees who were flagged in these tactical databases collected from the battlefield in Afghanistan?

Mr. YOUNG. I was going to say, sir, we are definitely coordinating with DOD, State Department, as well as DHS. We do hold much of your concerns. We have lessons learned from Iraq previously, and understanding that we need to be able to check any of these individuals, screen not only against our common databases but some of our classified databases as well as information sharing with foreign partners.

This remains a challenge for us. I would second that even some of the concerns of individuals as al-Qaeda has been in the business for a long time, they understand how to move clean operatives, and these continue to be challenges for us.

Senator PORTMAN. OK. I think it is important that we have learned lessons, and I hope we have. It is incredible to me that we did not just do the basic interviews that you would do for a refugee, obviously, and far more extensive, but anybody coming into the country, even on a visa. Specifically with regard to these 50 individuals, my question is have you found them? But perhaps you can provide that information to the Committee.

¹The DOD IG Report appears in the Appendix on page 55.

To Ms. Dobitsch, has your Office of Intelligence and Analysis changed its focus in light of these DOD Inspector General findings?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, sir. While I&A is not a screening and vetting agency we do support the Department's screening and vetting efforts through the production of our strategic analysis examining threats, and working closely to evaluate programs like the Visa Waiver Program, which is overseen by our Office of Policy.

We also maintain senior officers co-located at the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) to help with screening and vetting, and we support, through information technology (IT) and technical service perspective, the National Vetting Agency and the Department's efforts in the screening and vetting mission space.

The Department is working closely with the Department of Defense to evaluate the findings and the recommendation and data cited in the DOD Inspector General report. DHS was not consulted as part of that work to prepare, and I understand that subject matter experts will be providing Congress with more detailed updates related to that report.

Senator PORTMAN. OK. I hope you are taking it seriously and I hope you will make changes in your approach.

The Colleyville incident we have talked about, our intelligence and counterterrorism efforts failed there. They failed to detect a known terrorist, Malik Faisal Akram. He applied for the Visa Waiver Program via an Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) application. When asked to self-report he lied about his criminal history and terrorist activities. This program, as you know, is run by the Customs and Border Protection folks, and I am hopeful that the witnesses might be able to shed some light on these failures.

So back to you, Mr. Young and Ms. Dobitsch. In light of the attack on Congregation Beth Israel, what changes, if any, have the FBI and DHS taken to prevent terrorist from exploiting our Visa Waiver Program? Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. I would defer that one to DHS.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sure. Thanks, Ryan. In the wake of the incident we have been in active contact with our UK partners discussing Akram's case. Indications have surfaced that Akram had several criminal and potentially terrorist-related interactions with the UK government. However, none of these resulted in information that rose to the threshold to passing to the United States. The Department is looking to re-evaluate the information-sharing agreements we have under the Visa Waiver Program and looking for opportunities to close any gaps on the sharing of—

Senator PORTMAN. Our understanding is the UK government knew that this man was a terror risk. Is that understanding wrong?

Ms. DOBITSCH. I think, sir, from our perspective, the information that the UK government had did not reach the threshold for the sharing of that—

Senator PORTMAN. But did they think he was a terror risk? Yes or no.

Ms. DOBITSCH. I am not sure, sir, what the UK government has—

Senator PORTMAN. Yes. Our information is that they did, and so if that did not rise to the level of creating a red flag, I am not sure what would. I hope we are working to improve our intelligence and information-sharing with the UK, but also we have to look more broadly at this issue, and I know this Committee is doing that.

Thank you all for your testimony today and thank you for your service. Let's tighten things up. Let's avoid having another Colleyville event with more damaging consequences.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Ranking Member Portman.

Senator Hassan, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HASSAN

Senator HASSAN. Thank you, Mr. Chair and Ranking Member Portman, and thank you to our witnesses, not only for coming before this Committee today to discuss some really critical issues but also for your service to our country and for your commitment to our security.

I want to start with a question to you, Mr. Coleman. As Senator Portman mentioned, he and I introduced bipartisan legislation, the Pray Safe Act. It directs the Federal Government to establish a centralized clearinghouse of safety and security best practices, training resources, grant application information, and other assistance, all dedicated to securing houses of worship and faith-based organizations. Recently the Pray Safe Act passed out of this Committee with bipartisan support and now awaits action by the full Senate.

Mr. Coleman, do you agree that passing the Pray Safe Act, creating this clearinghouse, would help houses of worship access Federal resources to secure these communities?

Mr. COLEMAN. I do agree. In conversations with many faith-based and community-based partners I think one of the challenges that they often have is that they have to go to multiple sources of information to get information from a Federal perspective, and also I think many faith-based and community-based organizations often overlook the opportunities to connect with our State partners.

Senator, a good example, I think, is the New Hampshire Houses of Worship Resources webpage, which kind of consolidates information at the State level. Being able to have best practices like that, in addition to the resources that help to promote training and preparedness for faith-based and community-based organizations, from a Federal perspective would be very helpful and welcome by many of our faith-based and community-based organizations.

Our White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, through their preparing places of worship's interagency policy committee is also looking at similar efforts to come alongside to consolidate those resources and make sure that we can help ease the burden on navigating all of the different sources of information from our Federal partners.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you very much. I think it is just critically important. When you talk to faith leaders and their congregations right now there just seems so much literally to absorb and do, right?

Mr. COLEMAN. Yes.

Senator HASSAN. So thank you for that testimony.

Mr. Logan, Senator Peters mentioned this too. The fiscal year 2022 funding bill that recently passed included \$250 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which is an increase of \$70 million from the previous year. FEMA's Grants Directorate is responsible for administering this program in addition to FEMA's suite of preparedness grants.

As demand and funding for these grant programs increase, how can Congress ensure that both FEMA and State administrative agencies have the staffing and resources to effectively administer these grants?

Mr. LOGAN. Yes. Thank you, Senator, for that. First, we appreciate that the Congress, in the appropriation bill that was recently passed, did include a provision that allows States to use some of the grant funding, up to five percent, for their management and administrative costs. That is going to be incredibly helpful to them. They have struggled in the past to administer this program, because they have to take those management costs out of another grant program. This would be extremely helpful to them.

I also want to thank the Congress for providing additional resources to FEMA in the appropriation. It is going to be very helpful to us as we take on additional responsibilities and as this program grows. We appreciate the additional operation and support funding that the Congress has provided, and should we need more we will certainly work back through.

Senator HASSAN. You feel like at least it is a first step that what was provided now is something that gives you the tools to be able to address this expanded group and level of responsibilities?

Mr. LOGAN. I do, yes.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you. Ms. Dobitsch, I want to turn back to the issue that Senator Portman was talking about with you. I want to drill down a little bit more about the recent attack on the Congregation Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville. As we have talked about, because he was a British citizen the attacker in Colleyville was able to travel to the United States without a travel visa. That is because the UK participates in the Visa Waiver Program.

I am concerned that current information-sharing agreements do not adequately require criminal record information-sharing with the United States as a condition of participation in the program. Senator Portman really focused on what the British government knew about the attacker's status as a potential terrorist, or engaged in terrorist activities.

You mentioned that you are going back, DHS, to your British counterparts to look at your information-sharing agreement. But what I am really curious about here, I want to make sure that we are addressing, is how do we find a way to access criminal record data from the UK or from other visa waiver countries that allows for automated searches? How can we do this so that criminal record information does not fail to show up when we are vetting people?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you for that question, ma'am. I would say that certainly from an intelligence perspective we want to leverage the most robust data that we can have available to help evaluate

the extent to which someone may pose a threat if they enter the United States. Part of that is through evaluating and understanding the data that our partners have and how we can improve our information-sharing agreements and our routine and ongoing engagements with those partners to understand that information.

I would defer to my CBP colleagues and my colleagues at the Office of Policy on more details in terms of the methods in which we will formally pursue that process. But in the wake of the attack we certainly have re-engaged with our partners to understand what information they had and to really further find ways to integrate similar and like information into our evaluation of individuals who are seeking travel here to the United States.

Senator HASSAN. Thank you. What I would be very interested in following up with you on is how we determine what criminal records, if any, trigger an alert that would prevent an individual from participating in the Visa Waiver Program and having to go through the regular visa application and vetting process. I hope we can follow up with you and related agencies about that, because it seems to me in the world of much more automated data we should be able to drill down on this much more effectively and protect our security accordingly.

My time is about up. I did want to mention to Mr. Coleman and Mr. Logan, you answered a question from Senator Peters about how to make sure that the awards in our grant programs are really equitably disbursed, and I would note that an awful lot of the entities, for instance, who would be applying for houses of worship protection grants rely on volunteers. They are not heavily staffed places. They do not have professional grant writers. They do not even have full-time office staff often.

I would really encourage the Department to be creative and thoughtful. Mr. Logan, your answer about what you all are doing was very helpful. But I would really look forward to continuing to work with you on that, because you are going to get grant applications where people are doing their best but they do not have the kind of depth that sometimes the Federal Government expects them to have, but they desperately need this help. So thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Hassan.

Senator Lankford, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR LANKFORD

Senator LANKFORD. Mr. Chairman, thank you. Thanks for this hearing as well. For all of our witnesses, thank you.

Let me follow up on what Senator Hassan was saying. I worked with faith-based nonprofits for 20 years before I came here to Congress, and I would tell you she is exactly right. Most of them do not have full-time staff. They do not have a grant writer. They do not even know these programs exist. They have been around several years now and we continue to increase funding. The information-sharing to be able to get out to leadership of different denominations, organizations, to let them know, and then to be able to work through the systems and structures will be exceptionally important to be able to help individuals know that they have access to this. Most folks would have no idea that this kind of training

even exists, and would be very grateful to be able to receive it, if they were aware of it. The continued outreach will be very important on this.

For Mr. Young and Ms. Dobitsch, I want to ask you both this question. What definition does Department of Justice and DHS use for antisemitism? It is an important issue because we struggle sometimes to say is that anti-Semitic or not. What is the definition the Department of Justice uses, and DHS uses, for antisemitism?

Mr. YOUNG. Yes, Senator. At the FBI we recently got the Holocaust definition of antisemitism. We have passed that to the Department of Justice. They manage the definitions for us for consideration.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you. Ms. Dobitsch.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, I am not aware that the Department has a single definition that it uses for antisemitism. From the intelligence perspective we would say that antisemitism is a real and persistent threat to the American people, and the Jewish community remains one of the most targeted religious communities in the United States, whether from domestic violent extremists or individuals by foreign terrorists.

From an intelligence and threat perspective we are focused on the violence, and certainly antisemitism is an indicator of the potential for individuals to commit acts of violence based on those grievances.

Senator LANKFORD. No, I get that, and that is very helpful. This is one of the areas we have to be able to clarify by the agency. The State Department, years ago, accepted the International Holocaust Remembrance definition. Our definition is important. Dozens of countries around the world have accepted that definition. It is something the State Department has recognized.

Mr. Young, if I am hearing you correctly, you are saying that Department of Justice is now using that IHRA definition as well for antisemitism?

Mr. YOUNG. No. We were made, Senator, of this request, we have passed that to Department of Justice for consideration as they manage definitions for the Department.

Senator LANKFORD. OK. That would be helpful, and that is one of the areas where we need to have clarity of what is your definition. That allows everyone to be able to work off the same page on this and it is exceptionally important to provide that kind of clarity for us.

Mr. Logan, I want to be able to follow up on something. The breakdown of how the grants are used, is there a certain set of priorities to say more for training, more for physical hardening, more for security cameras, whatever it may be, so that when you are going through all the grant requests on this, how do you set the priorities for the type of action that would be needed? Because every location is going to need something different.

Mr. LOGAN. I think that is exactly the point, sir, is that every location is going to need something different. The challenge is to differentiate between need. To the Senator's point, we try to look at and discern what the actual need is. We try not to just fund the shiny applications but the ones that are actually telling us that they have a threat and that they have gone through the work to

identify their vulnerabilities. Then they tell us how they are planning on using that.

In some cases these could be multiyear investments. It could be a combination of cameras and access controls and training. In other places their physical security may be in a good place and they are really focused on the training, either of their staff or of their congregants, in many cases.

The challenge that we have is identifying a good use of the money and making awards accordingly.

Senator LANKFORD. I just had a practical question. As I go through the different awards that have been done in different places and look at them, a lot of them are round numbers. They are \$25,000, \$50,000, \$100,000. Then I see numbers like \$28,639, that are very exactly, and there are quite a few of those—\$144,517.

Tell me what I am looking at. I am not going to go through all the details and I am not asking you what it is. But how am I getting many of these that are nice, clear, round numbers, and if they are just an estimate that has been put out there, how is FEMA following up to make sure that that actually occurred on it? Because we want to make sure that equipment was actually installed, and all those things as well, and then versus those that are giving us a very exact number.

Mr. LOGAN. Yes. I think part of that, sir, maybe that it is that differentiation again between organizations that have the infrastructure to develop grant applications and have fully built-out budgets and organizations that are new to the program and are providing estimates, as you suggested. There may be organizations that are learning about the program. They have already costed out what they need. They have already costed out a camera system or access controls. Then they find out about the program and they are simply translating their invoices into a grant application, prior to having made those investments, of course. Then in other cases they may just be sort of guesstimating on the budget, and then we will follow up with them afterward.

Senator LANKFORD. But there is the follow-up there.

Mr. LOGAN. Yes, absolutely. We monitor these programs pretty closely.

Senator LANKFORD. Yes, again, we are grateful to be able to have the engagement here, to be able to help in all these areas, to be able to help harden these facilities, but we want to make sure it actually got applied at the end of the day and that it is actually making a difference on this.

To Mr. Young, I want to follow up, as well, Ms. Dobitsch. I am not sure which of you would take this, but I want to follow up again on what Senator Hassan was saying about the Visa Waiver Program. It is my understanding that we are not sharing our criminal history information with other countries, in other words, not telling them exactly what criminal offense has occurred from someone. We are not getting that information from a lot of visa waiver countries as well.

My question is, are we getting from other countries a list of just, yes, they have a felony record? We may not know what that felony is, but yes, they do have a criminal record or no, they do not have something on record. Because then we will know if someone checks

the box on it, no, I have no felonies in the background, but we are getting information from that country, yes, they do. That allows us to do a secondary screening there. Are we getting that information or is that in process, and if so, how many countries do we get that from?

Ms. DOBITSCH. I can start, and I will defer to FBI if they have any more to add. But typically, particularly for Visa Waiver Program countries, it is not common to share criminal information its citizens who are not deemed to be serious criminals. Again, there is potentially an issue in terms of the case Akram, where there were indications that suggested that Akram had criminal and potentially terrorist-related interactions with U.S. Government.

In terms of the information agreement, countries enter an agreement with the United States to share information regarding whether citizens and nationals of that country traveling to the United States represent a threat to the security or the welfare of the United States or its citizens, and those agreements are unique and different in terms of the type of information that is shared between those countries. I am not aware currently that information on criminal background is currently shared.

Senator LANKFORD. Mr. Young, do you have a quick comment?

Mr. YOUNG. Yes. I would just add we continue to have robust intelligence discussions with many of our partners, within the Five Eyes and many other countries, and we utilize the information shared in those intelligence channels to use at the Terrorist Screening Center (TSC). Right now we do not say, I was going to say, based upon that agreement, to get the criminal information, but we do engage heavily with foreign partners, and we do have robust sharing agreements in those intel channels.

Senator LANKFORD. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, this may be an area that we need to talk about, to follow up, to determine if we need to change some of those agreements to get basic criminal history and information. Even if we just knew they do have a criminal history, and we would not even have to know what all it is, we at least have a way to do secondary screening as folks are actually coming through the system as well. That is something we will have to be able to work through in the days ahead.

Chairman PETERS. Yes, I agree. We will look into that, Senator Lankford, because this issue has come up a few times in some of our conversations, and we will explore it further.

Senator Rosen, you are recognized for your questions.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you, Chairman Peters. This is such an important hearing. I want to thank all the witnesses for being here today and for your service.

Of course, you have heard all of my colleagues talk about Beth Israel, about all the threats, about the nonprofit security grant, so I am not going to belabor that. I am going to build a little bit upon that, because as we reflect on these growing threats to our institutions, the demand for these grants have far outpaced their availability. Of course, we know that we need to do all we can to protect houses of worship and other faith-based institutions. I was really glad to have helped work with my colleagues, on and off this Committee, to secure nearly 40 percent increase of NSGP funds for the remainder of this fiscal year.

But I really want to build on what both Senator Hassan Senator Lankford said. A lot of our institutions, these smaller congregations, they do not have grant-writing staff. They do not have a robust staff. They may be all volunteers, even. Could establishing a FEMA grant office specifically for the nonprofit security grant improve outreach and enable them to be able to use these funds in ways that make sense for them, and that we are using the money that we have allocated in smart ways, giving them technical assistance where they may not have it? Mr. Logan.

Mr. LOGAN. Yes. Thank you, Senator. As the programs grows we are looking internally in the way that the grant program's directorate is structured, to determine whether splitting off the non-profit program into a standalone branch makes sense.

What I will say on technical assistance is that the assistance that we are providing to the nonprofit community goes beyond the webinars that I mentioned, beyond the informational webinars. Once a grant has been awarded we provide a significant amount of technical assistance to help these organizations actually manage the grant.

We a grants management technical assistance program that we established several years ago. It is a three-day class that we historically have delivered in the field. The pandemic forced us to change our approach to that, but I think there was a benefit there because what we have done is broken the program down into small modules that are available online, any time anyone needs it. We started by doing some trend analysis on our audits to identify the things that trip up our grant recipients the most, things like procurement, things like keeping a good record of expenditures.

For a grant recipient who is about to try to purchase something, to ensure that they do that in compliance with Federal regulations they can go online and they take a 15-minute course on how to conduct a compliant procurement. We are building that out across the entire lifecycle of the grant.

The technical assistance is there, is getting better. I think the challenge that we have, that you all have pointed out, quite rightly, is getting people into the program, breaking down those barriers to participation. As I mentioned, we are doing a fair amount of outreach to help people understand the application process, how they need to work with their States to work through the application process, what a good narrative looks like to help make the case for this funding.

Senator ROSEN. Thank you. I think that breaking it up into smaller modules, doing it online, allows for more people to participate, get the information they need, so I will be looking forward to seeing that and being sure that you are getting that out robustly across the country so our communities can see that.

I also want to build a little bit upon antisemitism and domestic extremism. Of course, all the statistics that my colleagues have already mentioned, Jewish Americans make up two percent of the population but crimes targeting the Jewish community, 55 percent of religiously motivated crimes go against the Jewish community.

I was really surprised and disappointed that Department of Homeland Security's 20-page internal review of domestic violent extremism, released last Friday, did not even mention anti-

semitism once. I am also concerned by the finding in the report that DHS does not, and I am going to quote here, “track domestic violent extremism allegations as their own subcategory of misconduct. Instead, such allegations were classified under another subcategory.”

Ms. Dobitsch, we need accurate information to be nimble in the fight against violent extremism. We have to get actionable data out to our communities. Why doesn’t I&A track antisemitism and other forms of hate as their own categories? So again, people have their grants, we are doing all these other things. We need to be sure that we can act on it.

Ms. Dobitsch, can you tell me a little bit about why I&A does not track antisemitism?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you for that question, ma’am. For us, we look at all threats of violence and try to understand and analyze those threats that are politically or ideologically motivated in some way. In terms of the threat, we absolutely see antisemitism as a real threat to the American people. We have seen antisemitism fuel racially—

Senator ROSEN. So why not report on it? What is the issue? Why is it not mentioned?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Ma’am, I am not aware of the details of the internal review, which is—

Senator ROSEN. I will be glad to provide them for you. I think there has to be coordination between the internal review at DHS and how everyone is talking, FBI and DHS getting our definitions together. We have a lack of standardized reporting, of standardized definition, and again, communities are suffering out there, and not just the Jewish community. Asian communities, our African American communities.

I am not wanting to stop your answer but I am glad you are analyzing it. But if you are not defining it for people to really understand it, I feel that that data is not worthy.

I am just going to move, in my last 35 seconds, again to Ms. Dobitsch. Can you comment on a finding? There is a finding that the Department’s Domestic Violent Extremism Internal Review—again, you said you are not familiar so maybe you can write back to me on this—that you lack, and I am going to quote again, “standardized reporting and information-sharing mechanisms for investigating allegations of violent extremist activity.”

Perhaps you can comment off the record or in writing for us on that finding and what I&A is doing to address the reporting gap and the information-sharing gap.

I have a lot more questions. I will be submitting them for the record on online domestic extremism as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Rosen.

Senator Ossoff, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR OSSOFF

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to our panelists for your service to the American people as well to those joining us remotely.

My first question is for you, Mr. Young. As you are no doubt aware, this week we are marking the one-year anniversary of the brutal attack on three Asian-owned small businesses in the State of Georgia. Eight were murdered, six of them Asian-American women. These attacks shocked and devastated my State and shook the whole country.

Last May, Congress passed, and the President signed into law, the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, among other things, requiring DOJ to issue guidance for State, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies to establish and improve online hate crime reporting processes, collect data on hate crimes, and expand public education campaigns.

From the Bureau's perspective, what progress has been made, please, in the implementation of this law? How is the FBI involved? Can you please reassure my constituents in Georgia, particularly those in the Asian-American community, that progress is being made to protect vulnerable and targeted communities from these sorts of attacks?

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Senator. In regard to the current act, it is with DOJ. We are coordinating with DOJ on that. When it comes to violence against the Asian community, hate crimes, as you are aware, are on the rise, and the Asian community has been affected by that.

With our community outreach specialists in all 56 offices, the directive to those leaders in those offices is building those relationships, making sure that they are aware that they could be victims. We have also put out, with our transnational repression these other diaspora communities out there, that they are not to be victims, and if they are being intimidated by any foreign actors, as well, there are reporting procedures for that.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Young. As has been discussed in this hearing, just weeks ago, Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, suffered a horrific attack, and this incident follows other high-profile attacks on American Jews, including those at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, the Chabad of Poway, New Jersey, and a Jewish school in Boston. We all recall the imagery and the audio of white supremacists marching through Charlottesville, chanting, "Jews will not replace us."

The Jewish community in Georgia and Jews across the country have been shocked by these events and are deeply disturbed by the significant increase in antisemitic hate crimes and hate speech. What is the Federal Bureau of Investigation doing please, Mr. Young, to strengthen law enforcement's efforts to prevent, investigate, and prosecute antisemitic hate crimes in America?

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Senator. As you are aware, with the hate crimes we track this through hate crimes with our Criminal Investigative Division. Also when it comes to domestic violent extremism with the 56-State Terrorism Task Force we do communicate with the Anti-Defamation League, we do strong engagement with our Office of Partner Engagement, with the Security Community Network, so that we make sure that we are passing on any threats, any tips. We ask that community to continue to be vigilant and communicate those threats. If they see something, say something.

And just the second is we remain, across our 56 offices, having strong relationships with those communities.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Young. Mr. Young, can you please update the Committee, to the extent you are able—and I recognize that you cannot comment in great detail in ongoing criminal investigations—but HBCUs across the country, including three in Georgia—Spelman, Albany State, and Fort Valley State University—received bomb threats in recent weeks. I have been in close touch with the leadership at all those schools, as well as State and local law enforcement, and the students and faculty are resilient and determined to continue their work and education in the face of these threats.

I would like assurances, please, Mr. Young, as well as from you, Ms. Dobitsch, from the DHS standpoint, that the Bureau and DHS are doing everything in their power to investigate these threats and using every available resource to support and protect these institutions and their students and faculties. Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Yes. Thank you, Senator. This continues to be our highest priority for our Counterterrorism Division. As you are aware, we are at 60-plus threats, and this spans across 31 of our field offices. We have engagements at the highest levels with those institutions.

We have conducted a number of phone calls with our Office of Partner Engagement as well as with DHS, with those HBCUs, with those historically Black churches, as well as our law enforcement partners. As you are aware, we also conducted ones with Members of Congress that had heightened concern on this matter.

We need to continue to keep those lines of communication up. We need those institutions and institutions like that to understand that the threat is still viable, even though we have not found any explosive devices at any of those locations. We respond the same way. We respond with all of our critical incident response services. We investigate these the same way, comprehensively, and we need to make sure that those offices and those institutions understand that we do not want to lull them into “this is not real,” as we need to make sure that that is not used against them if there is a device at any one of these locations.

We need to ensure that the vigilance stays high, that those institutions and those members keep those lines of communication open, and if they see something, they say something. Right we have it where we believe it is a group of individuals, as we have said. One individual has a number tied back to a number of phone calls. But we are going through all the legal process, all the investigative methods, to make sure that we can take this to the right conclusion.

Senator OSSOFF. Thank you, Mr. Young, and I do want to thank and commend the leadership at the Atlanta Field Office for their collaboration and for keeping my team and me well briefed on those efforts. With the Chairman’s indulgence, just briefly, Ms. Dobitsch, if you could comment on the same matter. Thank you.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, thank you. I want to underscore what my FBI colleague said about the strong partnership. We have also participated in numerous calls with our State, local, private sector partners on this threat, and we will continue to remain engaged.

From I&A's perspective, our goal is to make sure that those institutions, academia and others, have ready access to the information and that we share that quickly and efficiently. We have also encouraged the Fusion Centers to incorporate academia, faith-based organizations, and other institutions into their daily work as they evaluate these threats.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Ossoff.

Senator Padilla, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR PADILLA

Senator PADILLA. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Colleagues, as many of you have expressed I share the grave concern about the ongoing bomb threats against HBCUs throughout the country. The FBI has announced that it is investigating these threats as racially or ethnically motivated violent extremism, and currently right-wing extremist violence poses a huge threat to the general public, and particularly to HBCUs and other public institutions that serve significant minority populations.

My first question is for Mr. Young. Mr. Young, the Administration released a natural strategy to counter the domestic terrorism in June of last year. The Administration hoped to bolster information-sharing between Federal, State, and local law enforcement. I would like to know, what unintended or unexpected barriers have you encountered while implementing this strategy, if any, and an overall assessment of how implementation has gone.

Mr. YOUNG. Thank you, Senator. I would first like to say that I will get back to you with precise information on any barriers. Initially, we remain very close with our Federal partners. We utilize our Office of Partner Engagement, our Joint Terrorism Task Force, our other law enforcement task forces in the field, and we also utilize information-sharing through our Fusion Centers, to make sure that we are not only getting out raw information on threats and tips and that we are sharing what we call threat-to-life guardians. But we also are ensuring that our other law enforcement partners are getting either the classified briefing on these threats—we bring them in, if they do not have the security clearance at the time, we give them one-time read-ins, but we make sure that we are sharing information across all levels.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you. I look forward to the follow-up.

On a slightly different topic and a follow-up to something that Senator Ossoff was mentioned, last week the Senate Judiciary Committee, where we are both members, heard testimony from Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker of the Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas. The rabbi highlighted his experience with active shooters and preparedness seminars offered by the Anti-Defamation League, the FBI, and local law enforcement as being very helpful in that situation.

I also believe that partnerships similar to those mentioned by the rabbi are critical building an atmosphere that ensures the safety and security for those gathering to practice their religion.

Mr. Coleman, this question is for you. Rabbi Cytron-Walker credits the training that he received in helping him survive the hostage situation. Can you comment on the infrastructure, the capacity, the resources that exist? Is it ample enough to provide security train-

ing for all houses of worship, or at least those who may be interested, across the country, and if not, how else can the Federal Government improve the accessibility and availability of such trainings?

Mr. COLEMAN. Thank you for the question, Senator, and I am deeply appreciative to the rabbi, and many other faith leaders who have talked about the importance of training and preparedness.

I had the opportunity to spend some time with the rabbi and other faith leaders actually last week in Keller, Texas, right outside of Colleyville, where we had joined the Multifaith Neighbors Network to talk specifically about some of the preparedness training and resources available, not just from the Federal Government but from our State and local partners as well.

As part of our efforts for the Center for Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships, in addition to promoting preparedness and training such as active shooter training that is provided by our colleagues at CISA and the FBI, the DHS Center is also looking forward to building partnerships directly with organizations like the Anti-Defamation League, the Sikh Coalition, Multifaith Neighbors Network, Southern Baptists and others, because we ultimately know that those faith-based organizations are best positioned to take a lot of the Federal programs and language and put it in a way that is more accessible to faith and community leaders.

I think, in addition to helping them build partnerships from a Federal perspective and to help support our faith-based organizations directly, we also need to have continued investment for our State and local government counterparts as well. Many of the trainings that are happening day-to-day in communities are led by local law enforcement, local fire, and local and county emergency managers.

In addition to continuing to build an infrastructure, working across our Federal family to deliver programs through our protective security advisors that help with facility assessments, particularly for places of worship, I think that it would be encouraging and a helpful addition to help support some of our local first responders who are also going to be doing some of the day-to-day work to provide practical information and steps that are most relevant for their communities.

Senator PADILLA. Thank you. I look forward to working with you to continue to advance those efforts in California and beyond.

A follow-up question for Mr. Logan. Congress has provided increased funding for security grants for nonprofits. I know that has also been discussed in the hearing already. My specific question is, acknowledging that in some vulnerable communities, communities with maybe not the best historical experience with law enforcement agencies, where there is that lack of trust and confidence, including but not limited to immigrant communities, for example, where there is a hesitancy and in applying for funds or participating in some of these programs, how can DHS continue to outreach, build these partnerships, and advance the purpose of providing not just grants but the training and remove these barriers to communication, or basically overcome the hesitancy in some more vulnerable communities?

Mr. LOGAN. Senator, thank you for that question. It is certainly an issue that we are well aware of and working through. It is the kind of partnerships that we have with Mr. Coleman's office that help us address those issues. There is no substitute for face-to-face communication. Part of the challenge is helping communities understand what these programs are and what they are not.

I think some of the hesitancy that we see in communities, in working with the Department of Homeland Security, is a skepticism about what we are about, about why we are coming into their community, and what we are really after. So helping to explain the purpose of the program, helping to explain why it is FEMA that is administering these programs, and then again, building on the trust that Mr. Coleman's shop is creating I think will help to break down some of those barriers. But again, there is no substitute for face-to-face engagement.

Senator PADILLA. OK. As part of our follow-up, I want to get a better sense, after today's hearing, on how responsive we are to community leaders, organizations, other entities that approach you for that type of partnership or training or information, but how do we overlay that with knowing where there is risk, knowing where there is vulnerability, where there may be threats, and if there are leaders, organizations, et cetera, serving those communities that are not reaching out to you, how we are proactive in reaching out, knowing full well that overcoming the hesitancy, skepticism may be part of the work here, but no less important.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Padilla.

Senator Hawley, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR HAWLEY

Senator HAWLEY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to all of the witnesses for being here.

If I could start with you, Mr. Young, I want to give you a chance to address a question that I asked another FBI representative who came before this Committee following the Colleyville attack, the terrorist attack in Texas. As you remember, of course, the FBI special agent in charge at the time said, on the ground, and said repeatedly that that attack was not related to the Jewish community. Of course, that turned out to be exactly wrong, and at the time he was saying these things he knew it to be wrong.

I asked at the last hearing we had on this, which was, regretably, behind closed doors—no fault of the Chairman—I asked the FBI representative there, Assistant Director Langan of the Counterterrorism Division, why the FBI had taken so long to acknowledge that this was, in fact, a terrorist attack against the Jewish community. To my total bewilderment, he said that the FBI had not made a mistake, and the FBI special agent in charge (SAC) had been correct in wrongly saying that that attack was not related to the Jewish community.

I do not understand this at all. I want to make sure that we are on a level set here and we all understand the real facts. I am going to give you a chance, Mr. Young, to say to us, directly and clearly, that this was indeed a terrorist attack by an Islamic radical against American Jews. Right? You can agree with that, right?

Mr. YOUNG. Yes, we looked at it as the Jewish community is a vulnerable and targeted community. We had an individual that came into the United States from London with aspirations of targeting that community, and freeing a hostage. I do not know what information the SAC had at that time, but I can tell you all of our investigative steps were consistent with us conducting a terrorism investigation.

Senator HAWLEY. Great. It was a terrorist attack by a radical Islamist, Islamic terrorist, against American Jews. I think it is important to say the truth. The fact that the FBI took as long as it did, and it took the FBI Director I think to the next day to actually acknowledge the truth, and then you would have people come to Congress and continue to foot-drag on this baffles me. Frankly, it is totally unacceptable.

Let us talk a little bit, if we could, more about some of the details of that terrorist incident against those worshipers in Colleyville. If I could come to you now, Ms. Dobitsch. I understand that Malik Faisal Akram was a British citizen. He had a lengthy history of extremism and antisemitism, in particular.

For example, according to reports, he frequently traveled to Pakistan. He was a member of an ultra-orthodox Islamic sect that was banned in several countries and known for its ties to terrorism. He spent time in prison for violent offenses. He had been investigated by British intelligence for extremism as recently as 2020. He was a subject of interest to the British and on their watch list. British law enforcement reported that made comments about his desire to “kill and bomb Jews”—that is a quote.

Despite all of this, however, he was allowed entry into our country through the Visa Waiver Program. I want to ask and get this on the record in public, was the United States government informed of his background by UK intelligence when he attempted, and successfully entered our country in December of last year?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, to the best of my knowledge the Department certainly was not aware of this information prior to the individual’s travel, and all of the security checks that had occurred, even through the ESTA process, did not reveal any derogatory information on Akram.

Senator HAWLEY. How is that possible?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, my understanding is that much of the detail that the UK was tracking was considered criminal, and as I mentioned earlier, particular common among VSP members is not to share criminal information on its citizens, and that the information-sharing agreements, that information did not meet the thresholds.

Senator HAWLEY. You are certainly right that he engaged in a lot of criminal activity. In 1996, he served a six-month jail sentence for violent disorder following a baseball bat attack on a member of his family. In 1997, he served another jail term for destruction of property. In 1999, he was jailed for harassment, and after release he was jailed again for violating the terms of his sentence. In September 2001, he was banned from a courthouse in the UK after threatening staff and ranting about the September 11th attacks.

In 2012, he was arrested for theft and robbery. While in prison, he was reported by a prison Imam for concerning and disruptive

behavior, and he regularly participated in antisemitic demonstrations, marched for the release of terrorists held at Guantanamo, and then, of course, held hostage those worshipers in Colleyville, demanding the release of another terrorist, and he had been investigated by British intelligence for extremism.

So you are telling me that none of this was shared with or known to the United States government?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, again, my understanding is in all the security checks that were conducted prior to Akram's arrival, and once he had arrived in the United States, did not reveal any of this information. But in the wake of the incident we have been engaged with our UK partners to discuss this case, in particular, and to find ways to close gaps that we have in our information-sharing agreements that would allow for more sharing of information related to individual similar to Akram.

Senator HAWLEY. Is this a failure with the British not being willing to share? For instance, not all of this is criminal. That is a long criminal rap sheet, but then British intelligence was tracking this person as a person of interest. There are multiple intelligence reports here. None of that was shared with the United States government either? Is that because we did not ask for it, or is it because they did not share it?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, I would have to get back to you on the more specific details regarding this case.

Senator HAWLEY. I think that would be good, considering that this is a terrorist incident in our country, on our soil, that this guy was admitted to, where he walked right through, in December of this last year. Despite all of this, despite this extensive rap sheet, he was allowed into the country, and apparently, you told me that there were no flags that were raised. Right? Did you not say that there was no derogatory information that was flagged when he was admitted to the country?

Ms. DOBITSCH. As an inbound traveler, Akram's biographic information was checked against our intelligence-holding, lost and stolen passports, visa history, and charting rules prior to his departure. His biographic information as also collected upon his arrival, and this information did not yield any derogatory results on the individual.

Senator HAWLEY. That is extraordinary. That is just extraordinary. I would imagine a Google search could probably have turned up much of this information in the UK, considering his extensive criminal history. That is astounding, and frankly, it is frightening. Because who knows if that is the extent of our vetting, who knows who else is just walking across the border or walking through our airports? That is really exceptional.

I am going to ask you to follow up, as you offered to, Ms. Dobitsch. I will have additional questions for you. My time has expired, and other Members are here to question. But I think there is a lot more to learn here.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Hawley.

Senator Scott, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR SCOTT

Senator SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman Peters. I want to thank each of you for being here.

I come from Florida. Florida has a very vibrant and strong Jewish community, a lot of Jewish communities throughout our State. Jewish Floridians are our neighbors, friends, and colleagues. They have made incredible contributions to our State.

I recently had a roundtable with some rabbis and Jewish leaders in South Florida, and I was pretty saddened to discuss—I mean, they just feel under constant threat right now, and I think it is proven out by what the FBI said. Jewish Americans make up less than three percent of the U.S. population but they are a target of more than 50 percent of all religious-related hate crimes in our country. I think that is pretty repulsive, and it is hard to believe. You try and figure out, why is this happening?

Earlier this year we saw a disgusting antisemitic demonstration in Central Florida. When I became Governor, back in January 2011, we had issues in one of our universities, so any time you see this it is just disgusting.

In January, just days after the horrific terrorist attack and hostage standoff in Texas, Jewish families in Miami Beach woke up to find antisemitic flyers in their yards. It was pretty bad. We have seen swastikas drawn on restaurants and car windows. Threats have been made toward Jewish day schools. There were so many threats to a Jewish day school when I was Governor that we actually gave them specific State funding to help with their security. Threats have been made to day schools all across our State. In Colleyville, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and Miami we have seen devastating attacks on our synagogues.

These attacks are disgusting, and they should never be tolerated. Our Jewish neighbors are increasingly worried about their own safety. They are asking themselves, are they going to be safe in synagogues? They are asking, are their children going to be safe? Is somebody going to deface their property or is somebody going to do something worse?

My first couple of questions are for Mr. Ryan and Ms. Dobitsch. My understanding is the attack in Colleyville is clearly being investigated as a terrorist attack. Is that right?

Mr. YOUNG. That is correct. I was going to say it was investigated as a case of domestic terrorism.

Senator SCOTT. Does the FBI and DHS believe that the Jewish community was specifically targeted?

Mr. YOUNG. The Jewish community was targeted and continues to be a target.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. Media reports say the suspect's brother described his sibling as a deeply troubled man who had grown distant from his family members in recent years, and according to his brother had been known to the counterterrorism police in Britain.

So I guess what you have said before is that he was not known to U.S. authorities. Is that right?

Mr. YOUNG. That is correct, sir.

Senator SCOTT. So we had four mass shootings when I was Governor of Florida, and as a result of that, in the FBI, some prior knowledge, they made some changes on how they dealt with infor-

mation that was coming through their hotline. Is there something that you all recommend that we ought to change to deal with something like this, making sure something like this does not happen again?

Mr. YOUNG. I can definitely follow up, I think, as Ms. Dobitsch said as well, on some of the information-sharing. I would say, based upon some of the incidents you are talking about, we went through a national restructuring of our Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) facility and how we take in what we call tips. We take in, through the phone, over 5,000 a day. We added, one of the elements to that is what we call "threat to life," so that we understand that we action those immediately. We also do get our internet tips as well. There have been procedures put in place to make sure that we are actioning those appropriately.

Senator SCOTT. Yes. I had the opportunity to go visit. I think the FBI made some big changes, and I think it appears that it is working.

Do you believe that the suspect in the Colleyville attack acted alone, or was he part of a cell in the United States?

Mr. YOUNG. I cannot go into too much of the investigation. What we know at the time was he acted alone.

Senator SCOTT. OK. Can each of you talk about what DHS and FBI are doing to counter the increasing hate crimes, especially these attacks against our Jewish communities?

Mr. YOUNG. Yes, Senator. I will start. I would say with DHS we are having many, with our Office of Partner Engagement and with DHS's Partner Engagement, with State and locals, we do a lot of security awareness, threat awareness, understanding those vulnerabilities, making sure that we are sharing that information. Especially right after incidents we get a lot of high demand from our law enforcement partners. Is this contained? Is this a situation that we need more information?

With that we also do an inordinate amount of engagement across our 56 field offices, from our community outreach specialists, to make sure that those communities have a voice, that they understand that they can reach the Bureau, what is the information we look at, and that goes through our engagement. Then, as well, with our engagement with the Secure Community Network, which a lot of the synagogues report to. We ensure that we get those threat information or any tips that have been provided to us as well.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Sir, from I&A's perspective we have intelligence officers located throughout the United States who are working directly with faith-based organizations in each State. With their help, I&A conducts routine threat briefings with faith-based organizations. We share relative intelligence and analysis on threats facing religious communities and institutions, working with our colleagues at FBI. We support the broader departmental, Federal, State, and local initiatives to support these organizations.

We believe it is critical that they have ready access to the information they need to protect their communities, and as I mentioned earlier, I&A works at the lowest possible classification level to share that intelligence and information with the broadest Homeland Security stakeholders in addition to the faith-based communities.

In the last year, we have briefed members of the Secure Communications Network, the Jewish Federations of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Kentucky, and we have also engaged other faith-based communities like the Sikh American Legal Defense Fund, and we are expected to speak at a kickoff they are doing in March, looking at protecting places of worship 101. We are actively engaged and we have redoubled our efforts in this space.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you. Ms. Dobitsch, can you talk a little bit about what DHS is doing to make sure that we do not have terrorism coming across our Southern Border?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Absolutely. We are working closely with our colleagues at CBP to understand the threat we face along our Southwest Border and working diligently to ensure that our screening and vetting procedures are in place and that we are doing robust screening and vetting using intelligence to ensure that terrorist do not cross our borders.

Senator SCOTT. Thank you.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Scott.

Senator Carper, you are recognized for your questions.

OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR CARPER

Senator CARPER. Thanks so much. I apologize for being in and out. We have a number of hearings going on simultaneously and we are trying to be in three places at once. I am pretty good at two at once but not so good at three at once. So thank you.

As former Chairman of this Committee, these issues are very important to me. They are important to my State. The Jewish Community Center was under a bomb threat a couple of years ago, and we have a Jewish student facility at the University of Delaware which has also been damaged in the recent past. We care about these issues and it is personal.

We thank you all for joining us. This will be a question for, let us see, codification of partnership offices at DHS, for DHS witnesses. This question is for any of our DHS witnesses. As you all well know, the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3), aims to expand the Department's ability to prevent terrorism and targeted violence through the development of local prevention frameworks.

CP3 office has been rebranded any number of times in the past, as you know. In fact, it used to be called the Office for Community Partnerships. I remember that. In previous Congresses I have introduced legislation to codify an office to work with building partnerships to counter violent extremism.

Question. Is CP3 something that Congress should work to codify? What benefits would that provide to the Department, and how would having dedicated staff and leadership help strengthen DHS efforts to combat domestic terrorism?

Mr. COLEMAN. As part of the Center for Faith-Based Neighborhood Partnerships, while I cannot speak to the codification of CP3, I can say that our office works very closely with CP3, because we know that many of the faith-based and community-based organizations that want to help keep their communities safe need to be actively involved in prevention.

Our office was able to collaborate with CP3 in October 2021, to talk specifically about targeted acts of violence, and I am encouraged by their intentional outreach and engagement and their humble posture to listen and learn from faith-based and community-based organizations on how they can improve their programs.

I would defer to my colleagues at DHS Policy and the DHS Office of the Secretary as it relates to positional codification.

Senator CARPER. All right. Thank you for that response. Let me ask Ms. Dobitsch the same question, and Mr. Logan, the same question.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, Mr. Senator. Obviously, we would also defer to the Office of Policy and the Secretary on the codification, but we also work very closely with CP3, particularly on the public awareness aspect. We help to share information, newsletters, on threats facing the homeland and our vulnerable communities, focused on prevention professionals, and ensuring that they have a good understanding of the threats they face.

Senator CARPER. All right. Mr. Logan.

Mr. LOGAN. Senator, thank you. I would similarly defer to the Office of Policy and the Secretary on the question of codification. We also work very closely with CP3 on their Targeted Violence Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program. We help them administer that program. I also personally serve on the Department's Targeted Violence Terrorism Prevention Executive Steering Committee, where we collectively address these issues and ensure that there is close collaboration and coordination among the various grant programs that we are responsible for.

Senator CARPER. All right. Thank you. I have a second question here, and the question is, my colleagues have frequently heard me say, "Find out what works and do more of that, and find out what does not work and do less of that." But when it comes to countering domestic terrorism we know that collaboration, we know that communication are keys to both the efforts of DHS and also the FBI. We also know that information-sharing at all levels of government gives us a better picture of the threat landscape that our faith-based organizations and higher education institutions are facing.

Ms. Dobitsch, Mr. Young, Mr. Coleman, how are you working to share best practices and relevant information with your counterparts across all levels of State, local, and Federal Government? Ms. Dobitsch, Mr. Young, Mr. Coleman. Ms. Dobitsch, would you go first?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, Mr. Senator. So yes, we have redoubled our efforts in the information-sharing space. In May of last year I&A established a new, dedicated domestic terrorism branch, focused on producing sound and timely intelligence needed to counter these threats. Most of the intelligence that is produced from this branch and others is produced at the unclassified level, which is available to our State, local, and private sector partners.

We have also significantly increased and improved our information-sharing across the threat spectrum, including disseminating that intelligence. We have had more than 50 engagements focused on informing our partners of the threat environment. This includes standing biweekly calls with State and local law enforcement and national-level calls with broader groups and stakeholders on

emerging threats. These engagements have ranged from dozens of participants to over 800 participants on national-level outreach efforts. We have really focused on, again, engaging, maintaining consistency in that engagement, and making sure that we are speaking to the broad range of threats.

Most recently, DHS, NCTC, and FBI released the U.S. Violent Extremism Mobilization Indicators booklet, which is available online, and covers indicators of violence from the domestic violent extremist actors, which is the first time that this mobilization booklet has featured indicators associated with that threat actor.

We are also working to support our efforts to inform the public. In addition to what we are doing with the office at CP3, I&A has worked with our partners across the Department to release several national terrorism advisory system bulletins that specifically reference threats to our faith-based communities and others.

Senator CARPER. I am going to ask Mr. Young and Mr. Coleman to respond to that question for the record.

My last question is, very briefly, Ms. Dobitsch, in your testimony with your colleagues you mentioned that since, I think it was 2010, there have been at least 30 likely ideologically motivated attacks, or attempted attacks targeting mosques, synagogues, churches, and religious centers, and faith-based communities. We have seen some of that in my own State. My guess is we have in Michigan too.

But while these statistics are deeply disturbing they are important when it comes to painting the picture of the current threat landscape that houses of worship and faith-based communities face. Ms. Dobitsch and Mr. Young, very briefly, are engagements with local communities helping to thwart these attacks? Additionally, how can Congress be helpful in ensuring you have what you need to stop these attacks before they occur? A two-part question. Ms. Dobitsch, you go first. Are engagements with local communities helping to thwart these attacks? How can we help in ensuring you have what you need to stop the attacks before they occur? Ms. Dobitsch.

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, sir. Yes, we believe, we hope that these engagements are helping to thwart attacks. We believe that anticipatory intelligence is a primary way in which these partners can be prepared and focused on prevention efforts. Our job, again, is to identify these threats and make sure that our partners have access to this information so that they can focus on preparedness, resilience, and prevention.

I will defer to Mr. Young.

Senator CARPER. OK. Thanks. Mr. Young.

Mr. YOUNG. Yes. I would echo what Ms. Dobitsch said. We partner on those calls, those engagements. We remain very close with that.

The one other thing in regard to your question, any time that we do a counterterrorism arrest we put out a joint intelligence bulletin, which is shared across our law enforcement communities so they understand what the indicators were. It helps them understand what to look for, what were the highlights, and what information are we looking for in our engagements.

Senator CARPER. All right. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for hanging in there and giving me a chance to ask a couple of ques-

tions. Thanks to our witnesses. This is really important stuff and we are grateful. Thank you.

Chairman PETERS. Thank you, Senator Carper.

I have one last question, and this last question is for Ms. Dobitsch. A DHS Office of Inspector General report came out last week that found that I&A identified open-source threat information in advance of the January 6th attacks on the Capitol but did not issue any intelligence products until January 8th. The Office of the IG found that this was both because of inexperienced collectors who received inadequate training and did not fully consider the guidelines for reporting information and because they were hesitant to report threats after mistakes I&A made in Portland earlier in 2020.

The report also found that one product that was submitted for review was not distributed until after the attacks, and that the Counterterrorism Mission Center identified indicators that there may be violence on January 6th but did not share that information outside of I&A. Further, the Field Operations Division considered issuing intelligence products in advance of January 6th but decided not to.

Ms. Dobitsch, what has I&A done since January 6th to fix these mistakes?

Ms. DOBITSCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think the report highlights the complexity and sensitivity that the Office of the Intelligence and Analysis works through every day as it relates to identifying threats online. We must work diligently to equally balance protecting individuals' privacy and civil rights and civil liberties while also anticipating and warning of threats of violence.

Since the tragic events that took place on 6 January, I&A has made substantial changes to the management policies, equipment, personnel, organization, and training associated with our open-source intelligence activities, focused on improving our ability to rapidly identify, assess, and communicate threats to Homeland Security stakeholders and leadership.

We have appointed new leadership and expanded the number of supervisors that oversee our open-source intelligence activities. We have implemented new technical solutions that improve the efficiency and oversight of our dissemination of our open-source report.

We have also doubled the size of our Privacy and Intelligence Oversight Office in I&A, and one of those new intelligence oversight officers work exclusively with I&A's open-source team to do exactly this work. This enables the open-source collectors to have real-time feedback and access to these officers, to help us navigate these very sensitive issues, again, ensuring that we do not violate our Attorney General (AG) guidelines and that we carefully balance, again, the need to protect individuals' civil rights, civil liberties, their privacy, while also warning of the threats.

Chairman PETERS. I appreciate your making efforts. This will likely be a topic of further discussion in future hearings as well as future communications with members of this Committee and your office.

I want to thank all of the witnesses for participating today, and for the Members who were here today for their thoughtful ques-

tions. I also want to thank Ranking Member Portman for holding this hearing with me.

Today's hearing provided, I think, an important opportunity for this Committee to conduct oversight on the Federal Government's actions to protect houses of worship as well as public spaces in general. The threat landscape is clearly evolving at an increasingly alarming rate, and the Federal Government's response capabilities absolutely must keep pace. No American should have to fear that attending their house of worship, visiting a supermarket, or sending their child to school will end in violence.

The testimony we have heard today will help inform our legislative efforts, and I certainly look forward to holding additional hearings on this topic in the future as well.

The record for this hearing will remain open for 15 days, until 5 p.m. on March 31, 2022, for the submission of statements and questions for the record.

This hearing is now adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:10 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery Full Committee Hearing: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces March 16, 2022

In recent years, we have seen an unacceptable number of violent threats, and deadly attacks, on some of our most vulnerable public spaces in communities across the country.

These targets have included spaces where Americans are going about their daily lives, and where they should have no reason to fear for their safety. Places like shopping centers, entertainment venues, schools, and frequently, houses of worship, including synagogues, churches, and mosques.

Last month, a man attempted to start a fire at the Al-Huda Islamic Center in Dearborn, Michigan. And just a few weeks before that, an armed British citizen held hostages for 11 hours at Congregation Beth Israel, a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas.

These are just two recent incidents after years and years of attacks, from attempted arsons to deadly shootings, at synagogues, African American churches, mosques and gurdwaras across our nation.

These insidious, hateful attacks not only take lives and cause physical injuries, they also destroy sacred property and leave deep traumatic scars on entire communities.

Everyone across this nation deserves to feel safe where they live, work, and pray.

That is why resources, like those provided by the Department of Homeland Security's Nonprofit Security Grant Program, are so important to keeping our communities safe and secure from these attacks.

This program provides grants to faith-based and nonprofit organizations to help secure their facilities, and fund training and resources to protect congregations from these threats.

I have long fought to increase the resources available to nonprofits and houses of worship who are looking to strengthen their security, and I was proud to work alongside Senator Portman last Congress to lead the authorization of this vital program. I look forward to continuing our work together to strengthen and expand the resources available for this high-demand program, to ensure we are effectively meeting the needs of our religious communities.

Although this important program is available to many organizations, it is all too clear that the evolving threats to our homeland security are targeting many other public spaces.

We have seen pervasive threats, and devastating attacks, wherever people gather, from the Pulse night club attack to the shooting at the Walmart in El Paso, Texas, and more recently during the nationwide bomb threats targeting Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

These diffuse and rising threats raise serious questions about the rapidly evolving landscape of homeland security threats that communities across the country are facing, and how federal agencies can better address them to protect Americans as they go about their daily lives.

Increasingly, lone offenders and small cells, who are often motivated by personal grievances, or ideological beliefs, present the most lethal threat to the homeland.

Many of them are radicalized online, through conspiracies, misinformation, and disinformation that merge to create a volatile environment and the potential for real-world violence.

To effectively address these threats, we rely on the FBI and DHS components, including FEMA and the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, as well as state and local partners, to respond and disseminate information to our communities to better protect people.

I look forward to today's discussion about what more Congress and our national security agencies can do to tackle this rapidly shifting threat environment and keep all Americans safe.

Now, I will recognize Ranking Member Portman for his opening remarks.

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Rob Portman

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
*“VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: EXAMINING THE THREAT TO HOUSES OF
WORSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACES.”*

MARCH 16, 2022

AS PREPARED

Thank you, Chairman Peters, for holding this hearing to discuss the elevated threat of violence and terrorism against our houses of worship. Just over two months ago, a terrorist made his way into Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas and held four people hostage for over ten hours. The perpetrator, Malik Faisal Akram, traveled to the United States from the United Kingdom with the intent to commit violence and terrorism.

I’m concerned that this attack wasn’t prevented. Why was this person not on the government’s radar, considering his criminal record and history of being investigated for terrorism in the U.K.? Why was he granted access to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, especially after he lied on his paperwork to CBP? In spite of his unmistakably dangerous past, he was able to travel to the United States, fly again from New York to Texas, illegally purchase a firearm. It was only *after* he attacked a synagogue that our law enforcement or homeland security officials detected the threat.

The incident in Colleyville was a blatant act of antisemitism and terrorism against the Jewish community. For too long, Jews in the United States have been targeted and attacked for their faith, facing threats of harassment and violence at an exceptionally high rate—Jews are the target of more than half of all religious-bias crimes, yet only make up two percent of the entire U.S. population.

This antisemitic violence has taken the lives of too many people. In 2019, one person was killed and three were injured at the horrific attack against the Chabad of Poway in California. In 2018, 11 congregants were killed and six were injured at the Tree of Life synagogue in Pennsylvania. In the last five years, antisemitic incidents across the country have nearly doubled.

Threats of violence go beyond just targeting the Jewish community. I often hear from faith leaders in Ohio that the Christian, Muslim, and Sikh communities continue to face threats of terrorism and violence. According to the Global Terrorism Database, terrorist attacks against religious institutions accounted for over 25 percent of all terrorist attacks within the United States between 2009 and 2019. That statistic is deeply troubling and threatens our First Amendment right to freedom of religion.

Terrorists and extremists often target crowded spaces with little to no security. Three years ago, an assailant with white supremacist views, targeting the Mexican community, opened fire at a Walmart in El Paso, Texas killing 23 and injuring 24 innocent people. The following night, an assailant with extremist left-wing views killed nine and injured 27 on a busy Dayton street, in my home state of Ohio.

After seeing the devastating effects of terrorism across our houses of worship and communities, we are lucky that the attack at Congregation Beth Israel this January didn't end in the loss of innocent life. While the ultimate goal is to prevent these attacks from happening in the first place, this incident showed us how preparedness and security can prevent violent attacks from escalating to lethal ones.

Congregation Beth Israel was a recipient of FEMA's Nonprofit Security Grant Program. The NSGP funded the synagogue's camera system, among other things, which improved the facility's overall security and provided first responders with situational awareness during the standoff.

I've been a longtime supporter of the NSGP. In 2019, I authored its first authorization, working to expand it across all fifty states. I also worked to double the funds from \$90 million to \$180 million. In January, I led a letter to the Appropriations Committee for increasing funding for NSGP to a level that reflects the growing terrorist threat to nonprofits and houses of worship. Last week, I was pleased to see Congress appropriate \$250 million to the grant program for Fiscal Year 2022.

In addition to the NSGP, Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, who was a hostage in Colleyville, has credited security workshops and training sessions by federal and local law enforcement, and nonprofit organizations, for providing the knowledge that saved his life. Unfortunately, many religious communities still don't know

how to access these trainings or grants available through the NSGP. We need to do better.

That's why last year, I introduced the bipartisan Pray Safe Act with Senators Hassan, Peters, Johnson, Rosen, and Rounds. The Pray Safe Act directs the federal government to establish a centralized clearinghouse of safety and security best practices, training opportunities, grant application information, and other assistance—all dedicated to securing houses of worship against threats of terrorism and violence. In the aftermath of the Colleyville attack, it is more necessary than ever that Congress quickly passes this legislation.

As we work to prevent violent incidents from occurring we must acknowledge that religious communities and other targets of terrorism are threatened by actors that hold a variety of ideological belief systems and motivations. And, we cannot lose sight of the fact that there are concerning trends and threats posed by both homegrown and international terrorists.

I thank the witnesses for their testimony and their commitment to keeping Americans safe and thank Chairman Peters for holding this hearing.



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**RYAN T. YOUNG
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES SENATE**

AT A HEARING ENTITLED

**“VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: EXAMINING THE THREAT TO
HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACES”**

**PRESENTED
MARCH 16, 2022**

STATEMENT OF
RYAN T. YOUNG
 EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
 FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

BEFORE THE
 COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
 UNITED STATES SENATE

AT A HEARING ENTITLED
**“VIOLENT EXTREMISM AND TERRORISM: EXAMINING THE THREAT TO
 HOUSES OF WORSHIP AND PUBLIC SPACES”**

MARCH 16, 2022

Good morning Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Members of the Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the current threats to Houses of Worship and other public spaces here in the United States. In a time of ever-changing threats, now more than ever, the FBI needs the support and confidence of the American people to secure public spaces where Americans gather every day. Threats to members of faith-based communities across the United States, Houses of Worship, and schools have been rising in recent years, as evidenced by the hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel, a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, and the bomb threats against Historically Black Colleges and Universities (“HBCUs”) that continue today. The more we work with the American public to share information and ensure the public’s trust, the more effective the FBI will be in carrying out its mission to protect American citizens.

The FBI relies heavily on our partnerships with affected communities to receive threat information and provide training on preventive measures to those communities. Prevention means working closely with community groups and their leaders. The FBI directly reaches out to various communities to hear their concerns, build cultural understanding, and foster trust. This is an ongoing effort, 365 days a year. Through this trusted partnership, the FBI works to empower citizens to protect themselves from ongoing threats and crimes. The FBI works proactively, using a wide array of intelligence and other resources, in concert with our federal, state, and local law enforcement partners, to disrupt and stop bias-motivated violence before it happens. Indeed, the FBI has recorded some extraordinary recent successes in interdicting violent hate crimes, including planned attacks against synagogues, churches, schools, and other public spaces. At FBI Director Chris Wray’s direction, we have created a domestic terrorism/hate crimes fusion cell, which brings together both our domestic terrorism expertise and our hate crimes expertise and ensures that the multidisciplinary nature of the problem is effectively addressed. And part of the goal of that effort is to be more proactive and preventive, and not just reactive.

FBI'S COMMITMENT TO OUTREACH

FBI headquarters divisions and every one of the 56 field offices has strong community outreach and works with minority groups, academic institutions, and religious, civic, and non-profit organizations toward crime prevention. Our outreach also includes local, national, and international safety campaigns and educational video screenings.

Additionally, the FBI created a Multi-Cultural Engagement Council, composed of ethnic, religious, and minority leaders to better understand these cultures and devise solutions to the threats facing these communities.

All of the FBI's outreach efforts are ways we help individuals and families stay safe from cyber predators; help businesses protect against hackers and economic espionage; protect Houses of Worship, academic institutions, and workplaces against violent rampages; and help all citizens be alert to potential acts of terror and violent extremism. I will now discuss some of the work and responsibilities of the three offices that collectively manage the bulk of the FBI's outreach—the Office of the Private Sector (OPS), the Office of Partner Engagement (OPE), and the Office of Public Affairs (OPA).

OUTREACH EFFORTS WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND ACADEMIA

Our Office of the Private Sector's (OPS) essential function is to strengthen the FBI's relationships with private industry and academia to protect the Nation's economy and national security. OPS outreach comprises intelligence product information sharing; engagement through field office private-sector coordinators; issue-based collaboration through strategic engagement advisors; private-sector cooperation through the Domestic Security Alliance Council (DSAC) and InfraGard, and strong relationships through the academic program.

OPS strives to facilitate one "FBI voice" and provide a consistent point of contact for private sector and academia to promote meaningful dialogue and build trust among the FBI and its partners. OPS works closely with FBI operational divisions to communicate threats and risks across different industries, sectors, companies, and public spaces such as hotels, grocery stores, and Houses of Worship. This past month, in response to the numerous bomb threats targeting HBCUs, OPS partnered with OPE and DHS to host a partner call for HBCUs across the country. Approximately 1400 participants were on the call, during which we provided a situational update, points of contact to report additional threats, and resources available to the academic institutions.

OUTREACH EFFORTS TO OUR LAW ENFORCEMENT PARTNERS

Our Office of Partner Engagement (OPE) coordinates enterprise-level strategies for the FBI's engagement with federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies. Through partner calls, situational reports, intelligence products, and timely electronic

communications, OPE leans forward to share information to keep partners apprised of threats and mitigation efforts.

Although outreach with Houses of Worship and faith-based groups falls under the purview of the Office of Public Affairs (OPA), OPE maintains the relationship with those in the faith-based community who are responsible for keeping the community safe and secure. Most notably, OPE works with the Secure Community Network (SCN), which is “the official homeland security and safety initiative of the organized Jewish community of North America” and other groups, such as groups related to the Catholic Church and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as well as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL). This role includes maintaining relationships with various national-level leaders in the faith-based community by establishing regular telephone calls between these groups and the FBI’s operational divisions. Additionally, OPE maintains regular contact with executives of these groups, responding to their concerns and keeping them informed of events of interest by leveraging FBI subject-matter experts from operational divisions to speak during these member calls.

Other examples of the FBI’s outreach efforts include creating an internal working group comprising OPA, Criminal Investigative Division (CID), and others to discuss House of Worship matters. One of the resulting actions from this working group was having Director Wray host two calls with approximately 30 faith-based leaders nationwide last month. Additionally, since 2019, OPE has hosted one-day symposia with community leaders to discuss various topics of interest on issues impacting these faith-based groups.

OUTREACH EFFORTS FROM OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) helps inform, alert, and mobilize members of the public to assist in investigations and empower them to protect themselves from ongoing threats and crimes. And by doing so, OPA strives to enhance public trust and confidence by sharing information about the FBI’s responsibilities, operations, and accomplishments.

There are several efforts underway in OPA that are part of the FBI’s broader outreach efforts. Further, there are ongoing conversations with HBCUs touching on the recent HBCU bomb threats and ways in which the FBI can protect schools.

To ensure coordination on matters pertaining to Houses of Worship, the FBI created an internal working group consisting of OPA, CID, and others. OPA also oversees and implements the FBI’s community engagement strategy, as well as the outreach efforts of more than 65 Community Outreach Specialists who serve in the field offices. Community Outreach Specialists develop and maintain relationships with community leaders and organizations. They develop strategic outreach plans and organize community outreach initiatives and events.

The recent incidents involving the Colleyville Hostage crisis and threats made to HBCUs are two examples of why it is essential to have strong relationships before a crisis. As part of the FBI’s response, OPA was able to quickly make several outreach efforts with local faith leaders,

minority, and HBCU connections because the FBI had preexisting patterns of engagement established by our Community Outreach Specialists.

On January 11, 2022, OPA and OPE met with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to discuss the protection of Houses of Worship. On January 18th, 2022, the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security conducted a partner call about Congregation Beth Israel, during which the FBI discussed the many shared resources developed along with the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), including detailed guidance and plans to respond to crises, such as active shooter or bomb threats. The FBI shared resources and links related to training, videos, and more with our national and local partners. On January 20, 2022, OPA coordinated Director Wray's appearance during Anti-Defamation League's national virtual meeting. On February 1st, OPA—along with OPE, the Criminal Investigative Division, and the Counterterrorism Division—met with Rabbi Cooper of the Wiesenthal Center.

As mentioned earlier, on February 2, 2022, OPA worked with OPS to host a partner call about bomb threats to HBCUs with our national faith-based and minority partners. OPA provided FBI resources and active-shooter training to help protect academic institutions. Additionally, when requested, the FBI will work with our subject-matter experts and conduct webinars and meetings with our national partners. On February 23, 2022, OPA held a large webinar for the Church of God in Christ to discuss protection of Houses of Worship. The church requested specific steps to take to make its congregation safer. OPA worked with the Criminal Investigative Division to share critical information to help these faith leaders.

CONCLUSION

In closing, Houses of Worship and HBCUs, along with other public spaces where people gather, require robust protection efforts, which start with effective partnerships. The FBI places a strong emphasis on partnering with community leaders to build trust and share relevant information to protect public spaces and fulfill our obligation to the American public. In working with our law enforcement and community partners, we systematically use, collect, and share intelligence. The threats to public spaces in our country are among the diverse dangerous threats that the men and women of the FBI work tirelessly to counter every single day, sometimes risking their lives in the process. Those threats underscore the complexity and breadth of the FBI's mission: to protect the American people and uphold the Constitution of the United States.

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, Members of the Committee, thank you again for this opportunity to discuss the FBI's efforts to protect Houses of Worship. I appreciate your continued support and look forward to answering any questions you might have.



STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD

STEPHANIE DOBITSCH
DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY FOR INTELLIGENCE ENTERPRISE OPERATIONS
OFFICE OF INTELLIGENCE & ANALYSIS

CHRISTOPHER LOGAN
DEPUTY ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR, GRANT PROGRAMS DIRECTORATE
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

MARCUS T. COLEMAN JR.
DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR FAITH-BASED AND NEIGHBORHOOD PARTNERSHIPS

BEFORE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ON

*"Violent Extremism and Terrorism:
Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces"*

March 16, 2022

Good morning, Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and Senators. We appreciate the opportunity to testify about the role of the Department in protecting houses of worship and other public spaces.

Threat Environment

The United States remains in a heightened threat environment fueled by several factors, including an online environment filled with false or misleading narratives and conspiracy theories, and other forms of mis- dis- and mal-information (MDM) introduced and/or amplified by foreign and domestic threat actors. These threat actors seek to exacerbate societal friction to sow discord and undermine public trust in government institutions to encourage unrest, which could potentially inspire acts of violence. Mass casualty attacks and other acts of targeted violence conducted by lone offenders and small cells acting in furtherance of ideological beliefs and/or personal grievances pose an ongoing threat to the nation. While the conditions underlying the heightened threat landscape have not significantly changed over the last year, the convergence of the following factors has increased the volatility, unpredictability, and complexity of the threat environment: (1) the proliferation of false or misleading narratives, which sow discord or undermine public trust in U.S. government institutions; (2) continued calls for violence directed at U.S. critical infrastructure; soft targets and mass gatherings; faith-based institutions, such as churches, synagogues, and mosques; institutions of higher education; racial and religious minorities; government facilities and personnel, including law enforcement and the military; the media; and perceived ideological opponents; and (3) calls by foreign terrorist organizations for attacks on the United States based on recent events. The recent Colleyville hostage situation marks a divergence in the type of activity we have seen surrounding faith-based institutions over the past several years from these actors, in that the threat actor traveled from another country, held congregants hostage, and attempted to use the hostage situation as leverage to release a federally convicted felon.

Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE)

A review of DHS information on domestic violent extremist (DVE) attacks and plots in the United States since 2010 reveals at least 30 likely ideologically-motivated attacks or attempted attacks targeting mosques, synagogues, churches and other religious centers and facilities and members of faith-based communities based on their actual or perceived religious affiliation. These attacks or attempted attacks were committed by DVEs with a variety of motivations including racial or ethnic grievances, anti-government or anti-authority grievances, and other personalized grievances. The most common weapons DVEs used in these attacks or plots were arson, which was followed closely by the use of firearms. The use of arson, in particular, is more common in the targeting of faith-based communities compared to other targets DVEs pursued during this time period. In addition, at least 22 of the plots and attacks involved lone offenders mobilizing instead of large groups. This trend is similar to DVEs overall mobilization patterns, as lone offender attacks are more frequent than large group attacks against a wide array of targets in the Homeland, which highlights how lone offenders or small cells motivated by various terrorist ideologies represent the most persistent and lethal terrorism-related threat facing the United States today.

Homegrown Violent Extremism (HVE)

Most attacks against faith-based institutions have been by domestic violent extremists (DVE); however, individuals inspired to act by foreign terrorist organizations, also known as homegrown violent extremists (HVEs), have also targeted faith-based institutions. Since 2018 there have been plots disrupted by law enforcement before they could occur that were inspired by ISIS. In June 2019, an individual plotted to bomb a church in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) and to inspire other ISIS supporters in the United States. Over the course of several months, the individual bought materials to assemble a bomb and used mapping applications to surveil his target. The individual was arrested by the FBI before he could carry out the attack. In addition, in December 2018 an individual plotted a mass shooting of at a synagogue in Toledo, Ohio, in support of ISIS. The individual surveilled and researched when the Jewish sabbath was so that more people would be present during his planned attack and pulled up photographs of the inside of the synagogue. The individual was arrested by the FBI before he could carry out his attack.

DHS Resources Provided to Faith-Based Organizations

DHS is committed to supporting efforts to maintain safe and secure houses of worship and related facilities while sustaining an open and welcoming environment. Through intelligence and information sharing, development of best practices and guidance, vulnerability assessments, training, and financial resources, DHS provides resources that assist in securing houses of worship. In our steady state operations, DHS provides resources and trainings on protecting places of worship, including: threat assessments, identifying and managing potential threats, “The Power of Hello” program created for places of worship; and the nationwide Protective Security Advisor (PSA) program, which includes a cadre of security experts available to assist with infrastructure security and vulnerability mitigation. In the wake of Colleyville, the Department is actively working to broadening the number, content, availability, and navigability of resources to educate faith-based organizations on issues of security and provide them the resources they need.

FEMA Preparedness Grant Programs

FEMA’s Preparedness Grant Programs address the Nation’s immediate security needs, enhance public safety, protect lives and property, and support the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2003, Congress has appropriated and DHS has provided more than \$56 billion in preparedness grant funding to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, the owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure, nonprofit organizations, and other community organizations. In Fiscal Year 2021 alone, DHS awarded approximately \$2 billion in preparedness grant funds across nine grant programs to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, as well as owners and operators of critical transportation infrastructure, nonprofit organizations, and the private sector, to improve the Nation’s readiness in preventing, preparing for, protecting against, responding to, and recovering from terrorist attacks and other hazards.

Of particular importance to places of worship, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides funding for target hardening and other enhancements and activities to nonprofit organizations that are at a high risk of terrorist attack. In addition to NSGP, DHS has made enhancing the protection of soft targets and crowded places a priority under the Homeland Security Grant Program, the Tribal Homeland Security Grant Program, and the Transit Security Grant Program. In total, these programs, discussed in more detail below, provided more than \$1.2 billion to state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, transportation authorities, and other community organizations in FY 2021. The Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Program (TVTP), managed by DHS's Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, also awarded \$20 million in FY 2021 funds to enhance the capabilities of local communities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism.

The recent hostage situation at the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, underscores the importance of these programs, especially the NSGP, in protecting houses of worship and public spaces from terrorists and domestic violent extremists. Congregation Beth Israel received a \$100,000 NSGP grant award in 2020 that enable the synagogue to advance overall security.

Nonprofit Security Grant Program

From FY 2007 through FY 2021, FEMA awarded approximately \$594 million in NSGP funds to some 6,500 nonprofit organizations at high risk of a terrorist attack. This competitive grant program provides up to \$150,000 to nonprofit organizations for a single location, or up to \$450,000 for a maximum of three locations, for training and physical security enhancements, including contract security, fencing, surveillance systems, access control systems, and lighting. The program is also intended to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives and with state and local government agencies. Secretary Mayorkas recognizes the importance of this program to houses of worship and other nonprofit organizations.

As part of our efforts to ensure that all nonprofit organizations in need of security resources have access to this funding, and in support of Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government, FEMA is conducting extensive outreach to underserved and marginalized communities to provide information and technical assistance in preparation for the upcoming FY 2022 application period. In addition, we are identifying and mitigating barriers to program participation, such as awareness of the program, ease of application, eligibility, and qualification requirements. The analysis will also illuminate where the grant program has not historically been awarded and enable us to more effectively address the security and needs of underserved and historically marginalized communities.

Homeland Security Grant Program

The Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP) helps state, local, tribal, and territorial governments build capacity to prevent, protect against, and respond to acts of terrorism. The program provided \$1.12 billion to 56 states and territories and to 31 high-risk urban areas in FY 2021.

HSGP recipients have regularly used the funding to protect soft targets and crowded places to enhance community resilience; in FY 2021, HSGP recipients completed requirements to spend at least 5 percent of their funds on projects that protect soft targets and crowded places. Funding also improved activities and communications with owners and operators of entertainment venues, shopping centers, large office buildings, and similar locations to provide information on preparedness and response activities, threats facing soft targets/crowded places, and available resources to enhance performance community resilience. Recipients also used funds to partner with critical infrastructure owners to help them evaluate their protective measures, identify vulnerabilities, and develop security plans.

Based on analysis of FY 2018 – FY 2020 HSGP grant awards, approximately \$38 million was sub-awarded to colleges and universities to address their security needs as potential soft targets.

Transit Security Grant Program

DHS also recognizes the vulnerabilities of our public transportation systems on which so many Americans rely. The Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP) provides funding to enhance physical security for transit systems and provides funding for “on the ground” law enforcement patrols specifically targeting potential terrorist activity prevention. TSGP funds are awarded on a competitive basis directly to the Nation’s highest-risk transit systems. TSGP applicants also receive additional consideration for project proposals that enhance the protection of soft targets and crowded places. In FY 2021, the TSGP provided \$88 million to 23 public transit systems.

Since FY 2006, more than \$1 billion in TSGP funds have been awarded to multi-modal/high-density transit stations to physically harden these high-traffic facilities against potential terrorist attacks. The funds also support specialized operational teams, including K-9 units, mobile explosive-detection screening teams, and physical deterrence to would-be attackers.

DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships

The DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships (DHS Center) carries out the policies and program priorities of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and DHS related to all-hazards preparedness and mitigation, emergency and disaster response and recovery, and combating human trafficking.

Originally established in 2006, the DHS Center has focused on the vital role faith-based and community leaders play in emergency management and safety and security. The DHS Center collaborates with our federal interagency partners through research, outreach, and building relationships and capacity across a diverse network of faith-based and community leaders, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, our first responders, and partners from the private sector.

The DHS Center also provides opportunities for listening and learning from faith-based and community leaders and local first responders. The dialogue focuses on what works at the local level and where the federal government could be more helpful in communication, capacity-building, and as partners to reaffirm our commitment to safeguard faith communities and persons at risk of discrimination, harassment, and hate-based acts of violence and vandalism.

The top priority of the DHS Center is to support and bolster a whole of government and whole community approach to increasing the safety and security of places of worship and community spaces. In 2021 alone, the DHS Center partnered across the federal family to reach more than 6,000 faith-based and community leaders.

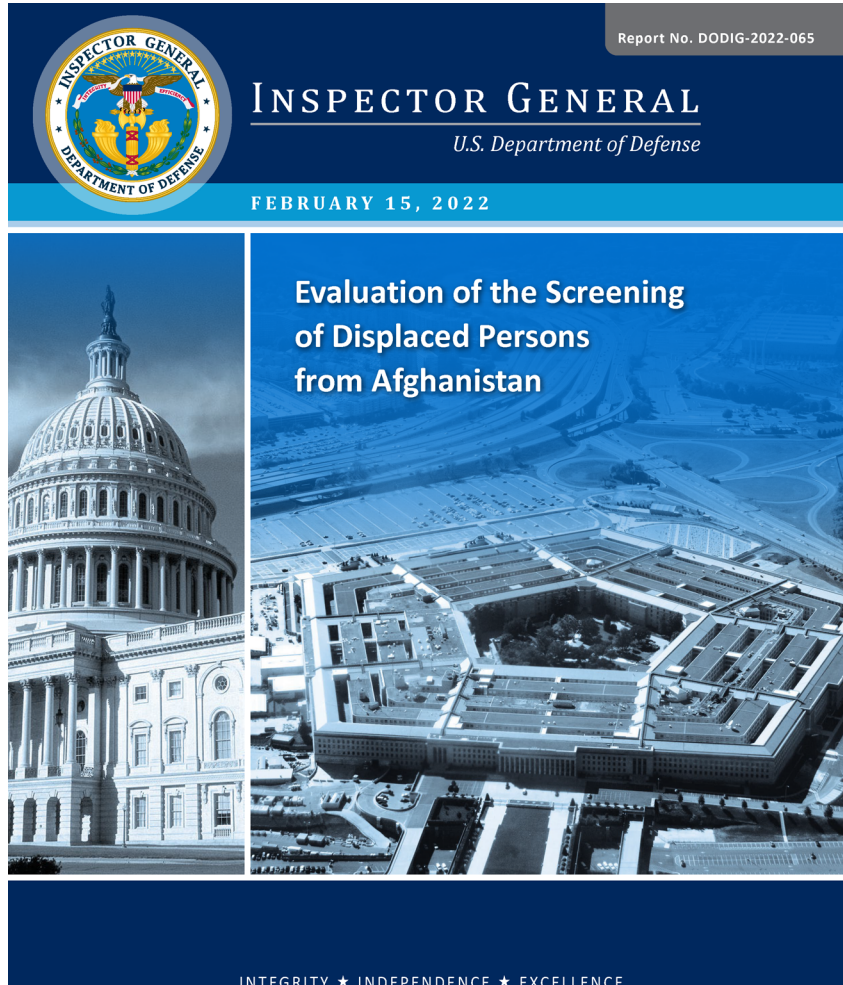
One example of national-level engagement occurred in August 2021 on the topic, “Preventing Targeted Violence and Protecting the Safety and Security of Houses of Worship,” where the DHS Center featured the voices and perspectives of a wide variety of faith-based leaders. More than 2,000 registrants participated in this engagement to provide multi-faith perspectives on steps to improve facility safety and security measures and in the many spaces where people meet alongside local first responders. In addition to these perspectives, the DHS Center moderated discussion alongside federal colleagues from the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Justice to ensure participants received actionable and practical responses to their questions, including how to apply for Nonprofit Security Program Grants. Additionally, the DHS Center, in partnership with other components, continues to facilitate timely outreach and invitations to faith-based, community, and nonprofit organizations to participate in technical assistance webinars for the FY2022 NSGP cycle.

The DHS Center remains focused on working with communities of diverse faiths, backgrounds, and experiences to prevent, respond to, and be resilient against such acts of violence, whether they are spurred by ideologies of hate, false narratives, or otherwise.

Conclusion

The recent hostage situation in Colleyville, Texas, at Congregation Beth Israel reminds us of the value of DHS programs dedicated to protecting houses of worship and other public spaces and is a call to action to redouble our efforts.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. We look forward to answering any questions you may have.







INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
4800 MARK CENTER DRIVE
ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA 22350-1500

February 15, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR CHAIRMAN OF THE JOINT CHIEFS OF STAFF
SECRETARY OF THE ARMY
SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR POLICY
UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY
COMMANDER, U.S. NORTHERN COMMAND

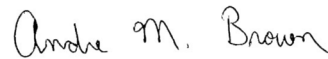
SUBJECT: Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan
(Report No. DODIG-2022-065)

This final report provides the results of the DoD Office of Inspector General's evaluation. We provided copies of the draft report and requested written comments on the recommendations. We considered management's comments on the draft report when preparing the final report. These comments are included in the report.

This report contains one recommendation that is considered closed and one recommendation that is resolved, but open. The Department of Homeland Security and the National Ground Intelligence Center issued an updated sharing agreement on December 10, 2012, that extends the National Ground Intelligence Center's access to Customs and Border Protection data until June 27, 2022. This action taken meets the intent of Recommendation 1; therefore, we consider this recommendation closed. The United States Northern Command Chief of Staff, responding on behalf of the United States Northern Command Commander, non-concurred with Recommendation 2, stating that the United States Northern Command does not have the authority to address the recommendation. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement), responding on behalf of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security, agreed with Recommendation 2, but requested it be directed to the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security for action. Therefore, we have redirected Recommendation 2 to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security and consider the recommendation resolved, but open. We will close the recommendation when we receive verification that procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with DoD and interagency stakeholders are in place.

DoD Instruction 7650.03 requires recommendations be resolved promptly. Therefore, please provide us within 30 days your response concerning specific actions in process or alternative corrective actions proposed on the recommendations. Send your response to [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



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Executive Summary

The objective of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the DoD managed and tracked displaced persons from Afghanistan through the biometric enrollment, screening, and vetting process. We determined that the DoD had a supporting role during the biometric enrollment of Afghan evacuees in staging locations outside the continental United States (OCONUS) and assisted in screening Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) applicants. However, the DoD did not have a role in enrolling, screening, or overseeing the departure of Afghan parolees at temporary housing facilities (safe havens) within the continental United States (CONUS).

Additionally, we found that Afghan evacuees were not vetted by the National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC) using all DoD data prior to arriving in CONUS. This occurred because Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) enrollments were compared against the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Automated Biometric Identification System (IDENT) data, which did not initially include all biometric data located in the DoD Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) database and because the DoD's National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) has agreements with foreign partners that prohibits the sharing of some ABIS data with U.S. agencies outside of the DoD. Subsequently, in August 2021, NGIC personnel expanded their normal analytic review of all biometric watchlist matches to also include non-watchlist matches of Afghan evacuees using all DoD data to close these gaps. Because NGIC personnel needed access to CBP records to complete this analysis, the NGIC entered into an agreement with the DHS to access the necessary CBP records. This agreement was set to expire December 27, 2021, prior to NGIC completing a full review of all Afghan evacuees.

Furthermore, during their analytic review, NGIC personnel identified Afghans with derogatory information in the DoD ABIS database who were believed to be in the United States. When NGIC personnel began their analytic review, they developed informal procedures to notify both the DoD and interagency stakeholders about these individuals. Subsequently, the NGIC relied on a broad dissemination list, with the expectation that the individual base commanders of CONUS safe havens would attempt to determine if the Afghan with derogatory information was located on their base.

We recommended that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Director, Defense Forensics and Biometrics Agency; and the Commander, National Ground Intelligence Center, extend the data sharing agreement with the DHS. They completed the extension on December 10, 2021, extending the agreement until June 27, 2022. We also recommended that the Commander, U.S. Northern Command, develop procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with the DoD and interagency stakeholders. Based on

comments received from the Chief of Staff, U.S. Northern Command, and the Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement), Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security (OUSD[I&S]), we redirected the recommendation to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security.

Objective

The objective of this evaluation was to determine the extent to which the DoD managed and tracked displaced persons from Afghanistan through the biometric enrollment, screening, and vetting process. Specifically, we evaluated the:

- screening of individuals biometrically, and whether the processes to screen these individuals was followed;
- identification, tracking, and management of the biometric enrollment of individuals who have never been enrolled in a DoD database;
- management of individuals identified as security risks through the screening process; and
- management and tracking of individuals' ingress and egress to DoD-managed facilities.

We performed site visits or conducted interviews with personnel at five of the eight DoD installations that were providing temporary housing for Afghan evacuees: Fort Lee, Virginia; Fort Pickett, Virginia; Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia; Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico; and Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. Additionally, we conducted interviews with personnel from the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the OUSD(I&S), the U.S. Army G2, and the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC).

Background

On July 14, 2021, the President initiated an inter-agency effort to evacuate and relocate Afghans who had applied for a Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) along with other vulnerable Afghans to address the rapid takeover of Afghan cities by the Taliban. The evacuation and relocation effort included transporting evacuees out of Afghanistan to temporary locations in the United States to allow for the completion of the immigration process.

Operation Allies Refuge

On July 14, 2021, the President announced Operation Allies Refuge (OAR) to support the relocation of interested and eligible Afghan nationals, and their immediate families, who supported the U.S. Government and applied for a SIV.¹ On July 19, 2021, the Department of State (DOS), the lead Federal agency for OAR, activated the Afghanistan Coordination Task Force, which coordinated the U.S. Government's efforts to bring qualified SIV applicants

¹ SIV applicants worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces as translators or interpreters or were employed by or on behalf of the U.S. Government or the International Security Assistance Force for at least 2 years between 2001 and 2021 in the region.

to the United States once their security vetting was complete. However, in August 2021, the Taliban rapidly gained control of Afghanistan's cities, culminating in the seizure of the country's capital, Kabul, placing many Afghans who assisted the United States or its allies at increased risk of retaliation from the Taliban. As of August 2021, the United States had evacuated more than 120,000 people on U.S. military evacuation flights, including American citizens, lawful permanent residents of the U.S., Afghan SIV applicants, and vulnerable members of Afghan civil society.

Operation Allies Welcome

On August 29, 2021, the President directed the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to lead Operation Allies Welcome (OAW). OAW is a coordinated effort to implement ongoing initiatives across the Federal government to support displaced persons from Afghanistan, including those who are eligible for an SIV, through a broad range of services. Additionally, on August 29, 2021, the President directed the DHS to lead the coordination of ongoing efforts across the Federal government to resettle Afghan refugees by establishing and leading the Unified Coordination Group. Efforts under OAW included initial immigration processing, screening, and coronavirus disease-2019 (COVID-19) testing. Additionally, the Unified Coordination Group planned all operations related to OAW, including screening and vetting Afghan personnel prior to arrival in the United States and processing Afghan evacuees at U.S. military facilities. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy represents the DoD at the Unified Coordination Group meetings.

Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations, Enrollment, and Screening

On August 21, 2021, a Joint Staff Director of Operations (J3) general administration message directed DoD personnel to enroll Afghan evacuees in the Noncombatant Evacuation Operation (NEO) Tracking System (NTS), which assigns a unique number, printed on a wristband, to each evacuee.² DoD personnel were then tasked to support the enrollment of every Afghan evacuee assigned an NTS number in the Biometric Automated Toolset System or the CBP Automated Targeting System for biometric screening.³ On August 29, 2021, the President designated the DHS as lead for biometric screening of Afghan evacuees traveling to the United States and outside the continental United States (OCONUS) military installations. The DHS worked with DoD personnel to conduct OCONUS biometric enrolling, screening, and vetting activities.⁴

² General Administration messages provide general information, request information, or request support, but do not task commands or staff offices.

³ Enrollment in the Biometric Automated Targeting System or the CBP Automated Targeting System is limited to activities that include collecting biometrics and biographic data and does not entail any analysis. The enroller enters the evacuee's information into the respective database and determines if there is any derogatory information on the evacuee.

⁴ Screening is the process of taking the enrollments and searching for other information available about the individual on the various databases to create a dossier.

Vetting is a determination of suitability. The U.S. Government uses the enrollment and screening information to decide whether an evacuee is suitable for something, such as access to an installation.

On August 21, 2021, the Joint Staff J3 directed DoD combatant commanders supporting the biometric enrollments during the Afghan relocation mission to assist with screening enrolled individuals against the DoD and CBP identification databases. The DoD stored its collected enrollment data in the DoD ABIS.⁵ CBP conducted approximately half of the enrollments of Afghan evacuees at the OCONUS staging bases (also known as “lily pads”) and stored its collected information in the DHS IDENT. The DoD completed the remaining enrollments and screened its information against the DoD ABIS database. Both the DoD and the CBP enrollment information was then sent to the CBP National Targeting Center (NTC). The NTC then sent the combined DoD and CBP enrollment data to the NCTC to crosscheck the information with the FBI classified Terrorist Screening Database and Terrorist Identities DataMart databases to determine whether an individual was free of derogatory information and was cleared for travel or if the individual needed further adjudication.⁶ After these preliminary checks, the NCTC transmitted the results through the NTC to the NGIC and the CBP. The NGIC received the list of individuals approved to travel and notified OCONUS airports designated to coordinate departures, while the CBP notified the continental United States (CONUS) airports designated to receive cleared individuals. The DHS and the CBP then approved the manifest for flights and certified that all passengers were clear to fly to the United States.

CONUS Placement of Afghan Evacuees

The DoD transported Afghan evacuees and SIV applicants to intermediate staging bases located in several countries, including Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Spain, Italy, Bahrain, and Germany. These staging bases (lily pads) served as emergency processing centers. Afghan evacuees were screened at the lily pads before being transported to DoD-provided temporary housing facilities (also known as “safe havens”) for SIV applicants and other Afghan evacuees at eight DoD installations: Fort Bliss, Texas; Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, New Jersey; Fort McCoy, Wisconsin; Camp Atterbury, Indiana; Fort Pickett, Virginia; Fort Lee, Virginia; Marine Corps Base Quantico, Virginia; and Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico.

Upon arrival in the United States, evacuees with green cards or U.S. citizenship were allowed to travel to their final destinations, while those who did not possess either a green card or proof of U.S. citizenship were sent to temporary safe havens for further processing.⁷ While at the safe havens, evacuees received medical services and a complete health screening, including COVID-19 testing. Furthermore, the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) provided administrative support to evacuees to expedite the processing

⁵ DoD’s ABIS supports storing, matching, and sharing of collected biometric data.

⁶ Derogatory information is information that potentially justifies an unfavorable fitness or access determination. Such information may prompt a request for additional investigation or clarification to resolve an issue.

⁷ A Green Card, officially known as a Permanent Resident Card, allows the bearer to live and work permanently in the U.S.

of applications for work authorization and immigration. The DOS and DHS also worked to provide initial relocation support to Afghan evacuees granted humanitarian parole, ensuring that those Afghans arriving in American communities have initial support, including short-term emergency health insurance.⁸

DoD Roles and Responsibilities

Several DoD components were involved in developing policy and direction for the DoD in support of the inter-agency effort to relocate Afghan evacuees. DoD Directive 8521.01E identifies specific DoD roles and responsibilities in regards to biometric processes, and Joint Publication 3-68 defines the roles and responsibilities of DoD organizations during a NEO.⁹

Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security

According to DoD Instruction O-3300.04, the OUSD(I&S) is the lead authority for DoD oversight of and guidance on DoD Biometric Enabled Intelligence programs, activities, and initiatives, which includes biometric enrolling, screening, and vetting.¹⁰ The OUSD(I&S) is responsible for directing the development and sustainment of Biometric Enabled Intelligence resources, capabilities, and capacity to meet validated requirements; providing support to irregular warfare; and countering human network operations.¹¹ According to DoD Directive 8521.01E, the OUSD(I&S) serves as the primary DoD point of contact with other Government agencies and international entities for all DoD entities that conduct biometric enrollment intelligence activities.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff

According to Joint Publication 3-68, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff coordinates the deployment and employment of U.S. forces in support of NEOs approved by the Secretary of Defense and monitors U.S. force participation in the protection and evacuation of noncombatant evacuees. The Joint Staff issued OAW NEO-focused general administrative messages for all combatant commands detailing how DoD elements should enroll, track, and screen the Afghan evacuees. The Joint Staff also established a Crisis Management Team to coordinate operational activities between the DoD and other U.S. Government agencies involved in the Afghanistan NEO. In addition, the Joint Staff supports the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy in the Unified Coordination Group led by the DHS.

⁸ The DHS, through USCIS, is authorized to grant humanitarian parole to foreign nationals to temporarily enter the United States due to emergency or urgent humanitarian reasons.

⁹ DoD Directive 8521.01E, "DoD Biometrics," January 13, 2016 (Incorporating Change 2, Effective October 15, 2018).
Joint Publication 3-68, "Noncombatant Evacuation Operations," November 18, 2015 (Validated November 14, 2017).

¹⁰ Department of Defense Instruction O 3300.04, "Defense Biometric Enabled Intelligence and Forensic Enabled Intelligence," May 25, 2012 (Incorporating Change 1, Effective May 28, 2020).

¹¹ Human network operations include counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, counter-proliferation, counter-narcotics, counterpiracy, and counter-smuggling.

U.S. Northern Command

The Secretary of Defense tasked USNORTHCOM as the lead combatant command for OAR, responsible for providing support to the DOS for SIV applicants brought into the United States. USNORTHCOM further delegated U.S. Army North as the lead operational command for the OAW mission. U.S. Army North provides medical screening, transportation, lodging, and general support to the DOS for Afghan evacuees on DoD installations.

National Ground Intelligence Center

The NGIC supports OAW and OAR screening and vetting efforts led by the DOS. On June 1, 2021, the DOS requested that the DoD support the DOS Afghan SIV applicant process. On June 2, 2021, the OUSD(I&S) informed the DOS that the Army tasked NGIC with screening Afghan SIV applicants for derogatory information that would make the applicant ineligible for the Afghan SIV program. On August 23, 2021, a collaborative general administration message from the Joint Staff J-3 requested that the NGIC post lists of the Afghan evacuees who were vetted and approved by the NCTC for onward travel to the United States on an unclassified, digital dropbox developed by the NGIC to ensure that all DoD personnel had access to the approved lists.¹² Additionally, the NGIC notified personnel at OCONUS air points of departure when the lists were available so OCONUS DoD personnel could create flight manifests for Afghan evacuees.

Defense Forensic and Biometrics Agency

The Defense Forensic and Biometrics Agency (DFBA) is a component of the U.S. Army's Office of the Provost Marshal General. In accordance with DoD Directive 8521.01E, the DFBA executes the responsibilities of the Executive Agent for DoD Forensics and Biometrics on behalf of the Secretary of the Army. As the Executive Agent, the DFBA leads, consolidates, and coordinates forensics and biometrics throughout the DoD across the range of military operations. The DFBA stores biometric data collected during military operations via direct enrollment or forensic analysis of material and shares the data with DoD partners. The DFBA, in coordination with the NGIC, is responsible for negotiating sharing agreements with the DHS for forensic and biometric data as it relates to Afghan evacuees.

DoD Roles and Responsibilities for Enrolling, Screening, and Vetting at Lily Pads and Safe Havens

On June 1, 2021, the DOS sent the DoD a memorandum requesting that the DoD support Afghan SIV applicant processing by verifying SIV applicants' qualifying employment with the United States. On June 2, 2021, OUSD(I&S) replied to the DOS memorandum and stated that DoD personnel, including the NGIC, were tasked with verifying SIV applicants' qualifying

¹² General Administration Message, "Genadmin Biometric Enrollments During Afghan Relocation Rev 01," August 23, 2021.

employment with the United States, which included a review for derogatory information that would make the applicant ineligible for employment. This review was specific to Afghan SIV applicants and did not include other Afghan evacuees. Once OAR commenced and Afghan evacuees began arriving at the lily pads, the DHS did not request additional NGIC support for the screening of Afghan evacuees, beyond the NGIC's continued support for screening Afghan SIV applicants. However, in August of 2021, to ensure U.S. agencies vetted Afghan evacuees against all biometric data, the NGIC expanded their normal analytic review of biometric watchlist matches to also include non-watchlist matches of all evacuees, in addition to SIV applicants. Additionally, the DoD assisted the DOS and the DHS in enrolling the evacuees into NTS at the lily pads and also provided biometric capable equipment that was interoperable with the DoD and DHS databases.

The DoD provided support for OAW, in conjunction with other organizations, within CONUS, including emergency housing and sustainment at DoD safe havens. Personnel at the five safe havens we visited or contacted confirmed that the DoD was not responsible for, or participating in, enrollment, screening, or vetting of evacuees at the safe havens. Instead, DoD efforts ensured that Afghan evacuees received basic life support and could continue moving forward with finalizing the immigration process.

Afghan Evacuee Immigration Categories

The DOS and USCIS identify Afghan evacuees in the OAW process as either SIV applicants or parolees. Under the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, the DHS and DOS are authorized to issue an SIV to certain Afghan nationals who worked for or on behalf of the U.S. Government.¹³ The DHS, through the USCIS, is authorized to grant humanitarian parole to foreign nationals to temporarily enter the United States due to emergency or urgent humanitarian reasons.¹⁴

Special Immigrant Visas

The DOS can issue an SIV under two separate programs. Under Section 602(b) of the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009, the DOS can issue an SIV to Afghan nationals who were employed in Afghanistan by or on behalf of the U.S. Government or by the International Security Assistance Force.¹⁵ The SIV applicant must have worked on a U.S. military base in Afghanistan, or the SIV applicant must have served as either an interpreter or translator off base. In addition, the applicant must have experienced an ongoing threat because of their employment and must have served for at least 1 year. Approximately 34,500 SIVs have been allocated under this program since December 19, 2014.

¹³ Public Law 111-8, March 11, 2009, "Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009," section 602, amended by Public Law 117-31, July 30, 2021.

¹⁴ U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website, "Humanitarian or Significant Benefit Parole for Individuals Outside the United States," updated November 12, 2021.

¹⁵ Public Law 111-8, March 11, 2009, "Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009," section 602, "Protection for Afghan Allies, Section B Special Immigrant Status for Certain Afghans," amended by Public Law 117-31, July 30, 2021.

Under Section 1059 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006, the DOS can issue up to 50 SIVs annually to Iraqi and Afghan translators and interpreters who worked directly with the U.S. Armed Forces or under the Chief of Mission authority at the U.S. Embassy Baghdad or U.S. Embassy Kabul. An amendment to Section 1059 expanded the total number of visas to 500 per year for FY 2007 and FY 2008 only. In FY 2009, the number of visas available for this category reverted to 50 annually.

The DOS and non-governmental organizations assist Afghans who have completed the SIV process and their dependents begin the resettlement process. The DHS grants humanitarian parole to those who have not finished the SIV application process while their SIV applications are adjudicated. SIV applicants can also apply for another immigration status through USCIS while awaiting their adjudication from the DHS.

Immigration Parolees

The United States Code permits the CBP, under the DHS, to process Afghan evacuees who are not enrolled in the SIV program and parole them into the United States for 2 years for urgent humanitarian reasons.¹⁶ An Afghan evacuee's immigration parole status is conditional upon their compliance with medical screening and vaccination requirements outlined in the USCIS Afghan Parole information document provided to evacuees upon arrival. To receive and maintain parolee status, evacuees are required to stay at the safe havens until all medical screening and vaccinations have been successfully completed.

Upon leaving the safe havens, the parolees must provide their address to USCIS and notify USCIS of every change of address. Additionally, parolees must comply with all public health directives, requests for additional information from the DHS and Federal law enforcement, and comply with local, state, and Federal laws and ordinances. Parolees may be subject to additional conditions of parole on a case-by-case basis. The U.S. Government arranges the parolee's travel to their final destination in the United States upon completion of the U.S. immigration process. U.S. Government agencies also help individuals connect with non-governmental organizations that may assist in their resettlement in the United States.

Finding

Afghan evacuees were not vetted by the NCTC using all DoD data prior to arriving in CONUS. Specifically, the NCTC did not have access to some DoD biometric and contextual data located in the ABIS database or to intelligence databases used by the DoD that are located on the Secret Internet Protocol network when they vetted Afghan evacuees. This occurred because CBP enrollments forwarded to the NCTC by the NTC for vetting purposes were compared against the CBP IDENT data, which did not initially include all biometric data located in the

¹⁶ Section 1182, Title 8, United States Code (8 U.S.C §1182), "Aliens and Nationality: Excludable Aliens," Section (d)(5), January 3, 2012.

ABIS database and because the NGIC has agreements with foreign partners that prohibits the sharing of some ABIS data with U.S. agencies outside of the DoD. Subsequently, in August 2021, NGIC personnel expanded their analytic review of all biometric watchlist matches to include non-watchlist matches of Afghan evacuees. NGIC personnel required access to the CBP electronic enrollment records to conduct the analytic review of Afghan evacuees and, on September 30, 2021, the NGIC entered into an agreement with the DHS to access CBP records to complete the review. However, this agreement was set to expire on December 27, 2021, and NGIC personnel estimated that they would not be able to screen all Afghan evacuees that are located in CONUS against the DoD's ABIS database by this date.

Additionally, during their analytic review, NGIC personnel identified Afghans with derogatory information from the DoD ABIS database who were already in the United States. When NGIC personnel began their analytic review, they developed informal procedures to notify both the DoD and interagency stakeholders about these individuals. Subsequently, the NGIC relied on a broad dissemination list, with the expectation that individual base commanders would attempt to identify if the Afghan of concern was located on their base.

As a result of the NCTC not vetting Afghan evacuees against all available data, the United States faces potential security risks if individuals with derogatory information are allowed to stay in the country. In addition, the U.S. Government could mistakenly grant SIV or parolee status to ineligible Afghan evacuees with derogatory information gathered from the DoD ABIS database.¹⁷

U.S. Agencies Did Not Vet Afghan Evacuees Using All Available DoD Data

U.S. agencies did not use all available data when vetting Afghan evacuees. Specifically, the NCTC did not use all DoD tactical data located in the ABIS database when vetting Afghan evacuees entering the United States.¹⁸ The NCTC did not have access to all DoD tactical data located in ABIS because enrollments conducted by CBP forwarded to the NCTC by NTC for vetting purposes were compared against the CBP IDENT database, which did not include all biometric and contextual data located in the ABIS database. While the IDENT database includes some ABIS data, it does not include DoD tactical data. Additionally, agreements in place with foreign partners prohibited sharing some DoD ABIS information outside of the DoD.

¹⁷ The DHS, in accordance with 8 U.S.C. §1182, designates Afghan evacuees as parolees while in CONUS locations, and those evacuees receive all rights inherent to their immigration parole status. According to DoD and DHS personnel, parolees cannot be detained by the DoD or other Government agencies and are authorized to leave CONUS facilities once medical requirements are complete.

¹⁸ DoD tactical data is information and data that is collected that details tactical operations, typically on operations in deployed environments. Examples of tactical data are tactical patrol reports from ground units, tactical operation debriefings, after-action reports, detention operations, and fingerprints on improvised explosive devices. This information also includes the who, what, when, where, and why of enrollees.

Because Afghan evacuees were not screened against all data found in the DoD ABIS database, NGIC personnel expanded their analytic review of biometric watchlist matches to include non-watchlist matches of all Afghan evacuees located within the United States, in addition to the OUSD(I&S) task of screening Afghan SIV applicants. This analytic review began in August 2021, and consisted of reviewing DoD tactical data to determine if the Afghan evacuees located in the United States had derogatory information in DoD databases that would make them ineligible to be in the parolee program. Additionally, according to NGIC personnel, the NGIC included all evacuees, not just evacuees enrolled by the CBP, because, at the time, the NCTC did not use intelligence databases located on the Secret Internet Protocol Network when they vetted the Afghan evacuees. According to NGIC personnel, by not including intelligence databases located on the Secret Internet Protocol Network, the NCTC did not include multiple databases that contain DoD tactical data. As of November 2, 2021, NGIC personnel had identified 50 Afghan personnel in the United States with information in DoD records that would indicate potentially significant security concerns.¹⁹

NGIC personnel did not receive formal tasking to conduct an analytical review of Afghan evacuees who were not SIV applicants; however, DoD Instruction 3300.04 directs the NGIC to perform analytical work in support of DoD force protection.²⁰ Specifically, as the Biometric Enabled Watchlist managers, the NGIC is tasked to develop and maintain procedures to nominate, de-nominate, validate, and share Biometric Enabled Watchlist entries in accordance with national, DoD, geographic combatant commands, and U.S. Special Operations Command requirements.²¹ Because of the responsibilities outlined in DoD Instruction 3300.04, the NGIC initiated the analytical review. OUSD(I&S) personnel stated that they were aware the NGIC was performing this analytical review.

According to NGIC personnel, when the NGIC began this self-initiated analytic review of non-SIV applicants, it did not have access to CBP enrollment electronic records created during the NEO evacuation operations because a data sharing agreement was not in place addressing the Afghan evacuee enrollment data. The NGIC cannot perform an analytic review of Afghan evacuees enrolled by CBP without the CBP enrollment data. This was approximately half of all evacuee enrollments. While it was not in the original policy to include the NGIC in the vetting process, the DHS's Office of Biometric Identity Management and the NGIC developed a temporary sharing agreement where CBP enrollments are sent to the DoD ABIS for screening to ensure that the NGIC has access to all enrollment data for Afghan evacuees. However, this temporary agreement was set to expire on December 27, 2021. As of December 13, 2021,

¹⁹ Significant security concerns include individuals whose latent fingerprints have been found on improvised explosive devices and known or suspected terrorists and for which the NGIC sends derogatory information notifications to appropriate DoD personnel.

²⁰ DoD Instruction 3300.04, "Defense Biometric Enabled Intelligence and Forensic Enabled Intelligence," May 25, 2021 (Incorporating Change 1, Effective May 28, 2021).

²¹ The Biometric Enabled Watch List is the NGIC-managed biometric database listing persons of interest, with individuals identified by biometric sample instead of by name, and the recommended action to be taken upon encountering each individual.

NGIC personnel have reviewed approximately 58,455 of the 80,404 Afghan evacuee identities received and have assessed that it will take until approximately March 2022 to finish this analytic review.

In addition, on December 27, 2021, the NGIC was initially required by the sharing agreement to purge all unmatched DHS Afghan enrollment information provided under this agreement, which would limit the NGIC's ability to conduct an analytic review on any Afghan evacuees not yet reviewed. According to NGIC personnel, their ability to do an analytic review on any remaining identities, as well as on any Afghan evacuees enrolled after December 27, 2021, would be severely inhibited if they were required to purge all unmatched DHS Afghan enrollment information. We discussed the need to extend this agreement with DoD and DHS personnel. On December 13, 2021, NGIC personnel provided us with an updated data sharing agreement. This data sharing agreement between the DoD and DHS extended the expiration date for the temporary sharing agreement from December 27, 2021, to June 27, 2022.

Some Afghan Evacuees With Derogatory Information Could Not Be Located

DoD personnel could not locate some Afghan evacuees whom NGIC personnel identified as having derogatory information that would make them ineligible for the parolee program conducted at CONUS safe havens. Specifically, NGIC personnel stated that they could not locate some Afghan evacuees when attempting to report derogatory information to the DoD and U.S. Government agencies supporting CONUS safe havens. NGIC personnel stated that there was an issue with either field representatives or operators failing to upload data or maintain devices properly. For example, personnel conducting enrollments at Afghan enrollment locations may not have properly updated the location field in the electronic enrollment devices. If the location field was not updated, the location recorded during enrollments would have had the wrong location.

For example, as of September 17, 2021, the NGIC had identified 31 Afghans in CONUS who had derogatory information. Of those 31, only 3 could be located. To attempt to locate the 31 individuals, the NGIC developed an informal process of sending e-mails detailing the derogatory information to DoD and U.S. Government personnel that either were located at, or had oversight of, all CONUS safe havens. The distribution for these e-mails included DoD, FBI, and DHS personnel. Additionally, the NGIC maintains a consolidated database that includes all Afghan evacuees it identified as having derogatory information that DoD and U.S. Government personnel overseeing CONUS safe havens can request access to.

As a result of not knowing the location of all Afghan evacuees with derogatory information, the NGIC developed informal reporting procedures to inform the DoD and interagency stakeholders. However, using informal procedures does not ensure consistency and timeliness of notifying the appropriate personnel of a potential security risk. Not being able to locate Afghan evacuees with derogatory information quickly and accurately could pose a security risk to the United States. In addition, the U.S. Government could mistakenly grant ineligible Afghan evacuees with derogatory information from the DoD ABIS database SIV or parolee status.

DoD Does Not Control Parolees Leaving Safe Havens Before Completing the Immigration Process

We confirmed through discussions with DHS personnel and DoD personnel at Fort Lee, Fort Pickett, and Fort McCoy, Afghan parolees have the right to leave the safe havens at any time after receiving the required vaccinations and tuberculosis testing, which was also described in the DHS Afghan Parole Information document. As of September 29, 2021, USNORTHCOM reported that the safe havens had received 55,346 Afghan evacuees, with 1,236 of those evacuees having left the safe havens voluntarily without finishing processing, other than meeting medical requirements, and 1,358 evacuees having completed processing and moved out of the safe havens.

For example, DHS personnel at Fort McCoy stated that at their location, most of the approximately 255 voluntary departures were either American citizens or individuals who had family in the United States that the parolees could use for support. We also confirmed with DoD personnel at Fort Lee that when Afghan personnel requested to leave and re-enter the safe haven, DoD personnel used a Commander's Critical Information Requirement log to track the individual's departure and return to the safe haven and reported that movement in a daily update brief to the commander.²²

The management and tracking of parolees' ingress and egress to the safe havens is coordinated between DoD, DHS, and DOS personnel. For example, DoD personnel from Fort Lee, Fort Pickett, and Fort McCoy described the departure process as staff at the departure desk notifying the appropriate DHS and DOS personnel of an evacuee choosing to leave the safe haven. DHS or DOS personnel conduct a meeting with the parolee to discuss the ramifications of leaving the immigration program early, arrange for the parolee's exit from the facility, and record and track the parolee's removal from the installation's lodging and other records.²³

²² Commander's Critical Information Requirements are elements of information required by commanders that directly affect decision making and dictate the successful execution of military operations.

²³ According to the USCIS Afghan Parole Information Fact Sheet, the ramifications can lead to termination of parole, detention and removal from the United States, and could prevent the parolee from becoming a lawful permanent resident or obtaining other benefits and immigration relief for which they might otherwise be eligible.

Management Comments on the Finding and Our Response

OUSD(I&S) Comments

The OUSD(I&S) Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement), responding on behalf of the USD(I&S), provided comments disagreeing with one substantive item in the finding. The Director stated that his office disagrees with the assertion that Afghan evacuees were not vetted by the NCTC using all DoD data prior to arriving in CONUS because the NCTC did not have access to some DoD biometric data located in the ABIS database or to intelligence databases used by the DoD. The Director stated that during approximately the first 60 days, not all enrollments were verified with the DoD ABIS. The Director stated that after a DoD-DHS biometric agreement was reached, all enrollments were checked against DoD holdings and previous non-DoD evacuees that matched to the DoD Biometric Enabled Watchlist were automatically selected for additional screening by the DHS. Lastly, the Director stated that the NCTC does not typically use SIPR, which would limit the NCTC's ability to access additional contextual information in real-time; however, he stated that this information is replicated to JWICS so that the NCTC would have access to it.

Our Response

We made minor changes based on comments provided by the OUSD(I&S) Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement) to ensure the accuracy of our finding. For example, we incorporated text in the finding stating that contextual data, in addition to some biometric data, was not included in the information provided to NCTC and stated that the NGIC closed the gap by conducting an analytic review of all biometric watchlist matches to also include non-watchlist matches of Afghan evacuees. Additionally, we incorporated text in the finding stating that enrollments did not initially include all biometric data, instead of stating that the DoD never addressed the issue. However, we did not change the statement that the NCTC may have incorporated the contextual information not included in the initial screening. We did not change the language because the OUSD(I&S) did not provide sufficient evidence to support a change. Additionally, we concluded that actions taken by the DHS to ensure that the NGIC continued its analytic review of all Afghan evacuees not on the watchlist, such as the extension of the data sharing agreement, indicate that NCTC did not have access to all available DoD data.

Recommendations, Management Comments, and Our Response

Redirected Recommendation

The USNORTHCOM Chief of Staff, responding on behalf of the USNORTHCOM Commander, non-concurred with Recommendation 2, stating that USNORTHCOM does not have the authority to take action on the recommendation. The OUSD(I&S) Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement), responding on behalf of the USD(I&S), agreed with Recommendation 2, but requested it be directed to the OUSD(I&S) for action. Therefore, we have redirected Recommendation 2 to the USD(I&S).

Recommendation 1

We recommend that the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy; the Director, Defense Forensics and Biometrics Agency; and the Commander, National Ground Intelligence Center, negotiate an extension to the temporary sharing agreement of biometric information with the Department of Homeland Security beyond the expiration date of December 27, 2021, to allow National Ground Intelligence Center personnel to complete their analytic review of Afghan evacuees for derogatory information.

Management Actions Taken

During the evaluation, we met with DoD officials from the NGIC to discuss the recommendation. On December 13, 2021, NGIC personnel provided us with an updated data sharing agreement with DHS. The updated sharing agreement, issued on December 10, 2022, extends NGIC's access to CBP data until July 27, 2022. By extending the agreement NGIC personnel will be able to complete their analytic review of Afghan evacuees for derogatory information. Therefore, management actions taken met the intent of this recommendation and no further comment is required. Therefore, the recommendation is closed.

Recommendation 2

We recommend that the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security develop procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with the Department of Defense and interagency stakeholders.

OUSD (I&S) Comments

The OUSD(I&S) Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement), responding on behalf of the USD(I&S), agreed with the recommendation but requested it be re-directed from USNORTHCOM to the USD(I&S) for action.

U.S. Northern Command Comments

The USNORTHCOM Chief of Staff, responding on behalf of the USNORTHCOM Commander, non-concurred with the recommendation, stating that USNORTHCOM is not tasked with, and does not have the appropriate authorities to engage in, the screening and vetting of Afghan evacuees or to respond to derogatory information

Our Response

The USNORTHCOM Chief of Staff and the Director for Defense Intelligence's comments were responsive. We have redirected the recommendation to the USD(I&S), and consider the recommendation resolved, but open because the OUSD(I&S) agreed with the recommendation. We will close the recommendation when we receive verification that the OUSD(I&S) implemented procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with DoD and interagency stakeholders.

Scope and Methodology

We conducted this evaluation from September 2021 through November 2021 in accordance with the "Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation," published in January 2012 by the Council of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency. Those standards require that we adequately plan the evaluation to ensure that objectives are met and that we perform the evaluation to obtain sufficient, competent, and relevant evidence to support the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. We believe that the evidence obtained was sufficient, competent, and relevant to lead a reasonable person to sustain the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

We identified and reviewed policies, directives, and orders related to biometric enrollment, screening, and vetting of Afghan evacuees to determine the DoD's roles and responsibilities throughout the OAR and OAW missions. Specifically, we reviewed the following criteria.

- DoD Directive 8521.01E
- Joint Publication 3-68
- Joint Staff General Administration Message, August 21, 2021
- DoD Instruction 3300.04 (Incorporating Change 1, Effective May 28, 2021)
- Public Law 111-8
- Section 1182, title 8, United States Code (2012)

We submitted requests for information and conducted interviews to gather information to determine which DoD organizations were tasked to conduct the biometrics enrollment, screening, and vetting; how information was collected and shared with the DHS and DOS; and what actions occur when the DoD identified an evacuee as a potential threat to national security.

We conducted an entrance conference with personnel from USNORTHCOM, the Joint Staff J3, OUSD(I&S), NGIC, Army G2, and the Army Intelligence and Security Command to determine their respective roles in the biometric enrollment, screening, and vetting efforts in relation to the OAW and OAR missions and determine their roles at the safe havens housing Afghan evacuees in CONUS.

We conducted site visits at CONUS locations, including Marine Corps Base Quantico, Fort Pickett, and Fort Lee and met with personnel at Fort McCoy and Holloman Air Force Base to discuss their involvement with enrollment, screening, and vetting processes for Afghan evacuees. We focused these site visits and meetings to determine potential shortfalls, issues, and concerns related to the communication and sharing of screening information between the DoD, DOS, and DHS. We collected rosters of Afghan evacuees from the safe havens we visited and evaluated the data on each of the rosters to determine how each installation is maintaining accountability concerning the Afghan evacuees located at their site. Specifically, we used the rosters to review and evaluate how DoD personnel track the Afghan evacuee movements on and off the designated living area at the respective installations when the evacuees are not fully vetted and cleared.

Management Comments

OUSDI(I&S)



**INTELLIGENCE
AND SECURITY**

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE
5000 DEFENSE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON, DC 20301-5000

January 20, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: Bryan T. Clark, Program Director for Overseas Contingency
Operations Evaluation, Office of the Department of Defense Inspector General

FROM: Garry Reid, Director for Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement,
& Security)

SUBJECT: Response to Draft Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons From
Afghanistan (Project No. D2021-DEV0PD-0161.000)

This memorandum provides responses to your request for OUSDI&S review of the
subject draft report. The Department greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate in this
important effort.

OUSDI&S concurs with Recommendation #1, noting the task has already been
accomplished. We also concur with Recommendation #2, however we request you assign the
responsibility for developing the data sharing agreement to USDI&S and not USNORTHCOM.

Additionally, we offer the attached recommended revisions to the report in order to more
accurately capture the details of the vetting process.

Lastly, the attached also identifies the portions of the report that should be marked and
handled as Controlled Unclassified Information.

Please feel free to reach out directly to my staff if you have any additional questions. The
point of contact is [REDACTED]

REID.GARRY.PA
UL [REDACTED]

Digitally signed by
REID.GARRY.PA0A
Date: 2022.01.20 13:33:12
-05'00'

Garry P. Reid
Director for Defense Intelligence
Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement,
& Security

Attachment:
DD form 818, Consolidated Comment Matrix

OUSD(I&S) (cont'd)

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CONSOLIDATED DoD ISSUANCE COMMENT MATRIX

U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. D2021-DE'0PD-0161.000

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCURE?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
U		1	2	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "CBP enrollments were compared against the CBP IDENT data, which does not include all biometric data located in the DoD Automated Biometric Identification System (ABIS) database" is partially incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: "It took roughly 60 days after the beginning of the NEO for CBP enrollments to be checked against the ABIS. A DHS-DoD sharing arrangement needed implementation before the data could flow real-time to support the effort more effectively. However, eventually all enrollments in support of OAW were checked against the DoD ABIS." Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning: Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "NGIC personnel were unable to notify specific base commanders and U.S. Government representatives at CONUS safe havens because the location of many of the Afghans that were identified as having derogatory information were unknown" is partially incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: NGIC personnel were able to send notifications to all eight (8) identified safe havens, Army Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority (ACICA), and US Army North, however NGIC was unable to determine which personnel could action the information appropriately based on the information provided. NGIC sent representatives to U.S. Army North to meet with the US Army North representatives to discuss the information and to reach counterintelligence streamers at each identified safe haven in an attempt to locate Afghans with derogatory information. The process of locating Afghans with derogatory information typically took three (3) to four (4) days, and occasionally the attempt was unsuccessful. It was determined that the Afghans who could not be located most likely had left (walked off) the safe haven sometime after arrival.	OUSD(I&S) Identify Intelligence Division, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U		1	3	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "NGIC personnel were unable to notify specific base commanders and U.S. Government representatives at CONUS safe havens because the location of many of the Afghans that were identified as having derogatory information were unknown" is partially incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: NGIC personnel were able to send notifications to all eight (8) identified safe havens, Army Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority (ACICA), and US Army North, however NGIC was unable to determine which personnel could action the information appropriately based on the information provided. NGIC sent representatives to U.S. Army North to meet with the US Army North representatives to discuss the information and to reach counterintelligence streamers at each identified safe haven in an attempt to locate Afghans with derogatory information. The process of locating Afghans with derogatory information typically took three (3) to four (4) days, and occasionally the attempt was unsuccessful. It was determined that the Afghans who could not be located most likely had left (walked off) the safe haven sometime after arrival.	OUSD(I&S) Identify Intelligence Division, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. DD21-DEV07D-0161.000						
CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR CONCERN	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
					Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	
U	4		3	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "Upon arrival in the United States, seamen with green cards or U.S. citizenship were allowed to travel to their final destinations, while those who did not possess either a green card or proof of U.S. citizenship were required to remain at the temporary safe haven until they fulfilled all medical requirements" is incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: During the initial stages of OAW there were no restrictions placed on Afghan personnel walking off the safe havens. Eventually, Afghan personnel were informed that leaving the installation would result in adverse consequences regarding immigration processing. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	OUSDI(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]
U	5		2	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "In July 2021, the Secretary of Defense designated the Director of Defense Intelligence (Intelligence & Security) DD(I&S) as the lead for the internal DoD Crisis Action Group" is incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: In July 2021, the Secretary of Defense designated the Director of Defense Intelligence (Counterintelligence, Law Enforcement & Security) DD(CI&S) as the lead for the internal DoD Crisis Action Group. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	OUSDI(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]
U	5		2	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "The DD(I&S) coordinates the effort to support the DOS request for assistance in screening	OUSDI(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]

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OUSD(I&S) (cont'd)

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CONSOLIDATED DoD ISSUANCE COMMENT MATRIX

U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. D2021-DE\0PD-0161.000

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCURE?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
U		9	1	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "However, when NGIC personnel attempted to notify the base commanders and U.S. Government representatives at CONUS safe havens, they found that the Afghans' locations were unknown", is partially incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: NGIC personnel notified base commanders through large email distribution lists and it was unclear if the information was received by the appropriate personnel on a case-by-case basis. NGIC sent representatives to U.S. Army North to mitigate this issue. NGIC representatives worked with 902nd Army Counterintelligence Coordinating Authority (ACICA) at U.S. Army North to reach counterintelligence screeners at each identified safe haven in an attempt to locate Afghans with derogatory information. The process of locating Afghans with derogatory information typically took three (3) to four (4) days, and occasionally the attempt was unsuccessful. It was determined that the Afghans who could not be located most likely had left (walked off) the safe haven sometime after arrival. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	OUSD(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U		9	3	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "While the IDENT database includes some ABIS data, it does not include DoD tactical data," is partially incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: DHS IDENT includes a portion of the DoD ABIS that is shared. Contextual information associated with the biometric information is available to all SIPR and JWICS users through BTR. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	OUSD(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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UNCLASSIFIED CONSOLIDATED DoD ISSUANCE COMMENT MATRIX U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. D2021-DEV07D-0161.000						
CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR CONCERN?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND POC NAME, TITLE, AND E-MAIL
U		10	3	☐	Coordinator Comment and Justification: Statement "This data sharing agreement between the DoD and DHS extended the expiration date for the temporary sharing agreement from December 27, 2021, to July 27, 2022," is incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: This data sharing agreement between the DoD and DHS extended the expiration date for the temporary sharing agreement from December 27, 2021, to June 27, 2022. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning: Coordinator Comment and Justification: The statement "The updated sharing agreement, issued on December 10, 2012, extends NGIC's access to CBP data until July 27, 2022," is incorrect. Coordinator Recommended Change: The updated sharing agreement, issued on December 10, 2012, extends NGIC's access to CBP data until June 27, 2022. Originator Response: Choose an item.	OUSD(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]
U		12	3	☐	Originator Reasoning: Coordinator Comment and Justification: Recommendation "Commander of the United States Northern Command develop procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with the Department of Defense and interagency stakeholders", is not an appropriate role for USNORTHCOM based on its tasking and authorities. USNORTHCOM's role in Operation Allies Refuge (OAR) and Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) is limited to providing basic life support and transportation for Afghan evacuees (AE) in support of the Lead Federal Agency (LFA). USNORTHCOM is not tasked with and does not have the appropriate authority to develop and implement procedures for AE responding to derogatory information. DHS is responsible for those tasks as the	OUSD(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]
U		12	4	☒	Originator Reasoning: Coordinator Comment and Justification: Recommendation "Commander of the United States Northern Command develop procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with the Department of Defense and interagency stakeholders", is not an appropriate role for USNORTHCOM based on its tasking and authorities. USNORTHCOM's role in Operation Allies Refuge (OAR) and Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) is limited to providing basic life support and transportation for Afghan evacuees (AE) in support of the Lead Federal Agency (LFA). USNORTHCOM is not tasked with and does not have the appropriate authority to develop and implement procedures for AE responding to derogatory information. DHS is responsible for those tasks as the	OUSD(I&S) Identity Intelligence Division, [REDACTED]

OUSD(I&S) (cont'd)

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CONSOLIDATED DoD ISSUANCE COMMENT MATRIX

U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. D2021-JE\0PD-0161.000

CLASS	#	PAGE	PARA	BASIS FOR NON-CONCURE?	COMMENTS, JUSTIFICATION, AND ORIGINATOR JUSTIFICATION FOR RESOLUTION	COMPONENT AND FOC NAME, PHONE, AND E-MAIL
					LEA, and is the Federal department with the immigration and law enforcement authorities required. To the extent that DOD has provided any support to DHS for screening/vetting of AEs or responding to derogatory information, such support has been coordinated by USD(I&S), not USNORTHCOM. DHS is also responsible for the CONUS tracking of AEs from arrival through resettlement. Coordinator Recommended Change: Recommend Commander NORTHCOM develop procedures in conjunction with DHS and DOS for ensuring shared awareness regarding location of Afghan evacuees located on U.S. DoD facilities. Ensure information is disseminated throughout DoD and interagency stakeholder organizations. OF NOTE: USNORTHCOM C334 Rep Mr. Gosselin, recommended Critical non-Concur to USNORTHCOM C33 regarding Recommendation 2. Originator Response: Choose an item. Originator Reasoning:	

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U.S. DoD IG: "Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan" Project No. D2021-DEV-07D-0161.000

CONSOLIDATED DDd ISSUANCE COMMENT MATRIX

HOW TO FILL OUT THE DD818-I MATRIX

GENERAL GUIDANCE:

- To **sort table** by page/paragraph number, hover your mouse over the top of the first cell in the "Page" column until a downward arrow appears; click and drag to the right to select both page and para columns. Under Paragraph on the Home ribbon, select A-Z button, set to sort by Column 3 and then Column 4, and select "OK." To **add new rows**, copy and paste a blank row to keep consistent formatting. To **add automatic numbering to column 2**, select entire column and click on the Numbering button under Paragraph on the Home ribbon.

OSD COMPONENT (OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY):

- Do **not** use the DD Form 818.
- Consolidate comments from all coordinators and adjudicate them. When **past**ing coordinator's comments from the coordinating Components' DD Form 818a into your consolidated DD Form 818-I, use "Insert New Row" paste option. You do not need to include administrative comments (spelling, paragraph numbering, etc.), in the consolidated DD Form 818-I. Leave columns 3 and 4 blank for general comments that apply to the whole document.
- Sort comments** by the pages/paragraphs to which they apply using the **General Guidance** sort feature (e.g., all comments from all coordinators that apply to Page 3, Paragraph 1.1.a., should be together; all comments that apply to Page 3, Paragraph 1.1.b., should be next). Set classification header, footer, Column 2, and complete the last two entries in Column 6.

COLLAPSE

6

If you rejected or partially accepted a comment, enter your rationale in the originator reasoning area. If any material is **classified**, follow DoDM 5200.01 guidance for marking the document. Leave originator reasoning area blank if you accepted it. Include any related communications with the coordinating Component. You **must** provide convincing support for rejecting nonconcurrence comments.

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USNORTHCOM



**NORTH AMERICAN AEROSPACE DEFENSE COMMAND
AND
UNITED STATES NORTHERN COMMAND**



JAN 19 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR Department of Defense Inspector General (DoD OIG), 4800 Mark Center Drive, Alexandria, VA 22350

SUBJECT: NORAD and USNORTHCOM (N&NC) Response to DoD OIG's Recommendation in the draft Report Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan (Project No. D2021-DEV0PD-0161.000)

This is the N&NC response to the recommendation in the subject draft report dated January 4, 2022. N&NC appreciates the DoD OIG's work on this engagement, as well as the opportunity to review and comment on the draft report. We have reviewed your recommendation and our response is below.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the Commander of the United States Northern Command develop procedures for sharing derogatory information on Afghan evacuees with the Department of Defense and interagency stakeholders.

USNORTHCOM's response to Recommendation 2: Non-Concur

USNORTHCOM's role in Operation Allies Refuge (OAR) and Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) is limited to providing basic life support and transportation for Afghan Evacuees (AE) in support of the Lead Federal Agency (LFA). USNORTHCOM is not tasked with and does not have the appropriate authorities to engage in the screening/vetting of AEs or responding to derogatory information. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is responsible for those tasks as the LFA, and is the Federal department with the immigration and law enforcement authorities required. DHS is also responsible for the CONUS tracking of AEs from arrival through resettlement. To the extent that DoD has provided any support to DHS for screening/vetting of AEs or responding to derogatory information, such support has been coordinated by USD(I&S), not USNORTHCOM.

Point of contact for this memorandum is [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

Michael Holland
RADM, USN
N&NC Chief of Staff

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABIS	Automated Biometric Identification System
CBP	Customs and Border Protection
CONUS	Continental United States
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease-2019
DFBA	Defense Forensic and Biometrics Agency
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOS	Department of State
IDENT	Automated Biometric Identification System
NCTC	National Counter-Terrorism Center
NEO	Noncombatant Evacuation Operation
NGIC	National Ground Intelligence Center
NTC	National Targeting Center
NTS	NEO Tracking System
OAR	Operation Allies Refuge
OAW	Operation Allies Welcome
OCONUS	Outside the Continental United States
OUUSD(I&S)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security
SIV	Special Immigrant Visa
USCIS	United States Citizenship and Immigration Services
USD(I&S)	Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Security
USNORTHCOM	United States Northern Command



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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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Statement for the Record

**Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat
to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces**

Jonathan Greenblatt

CEO & National Director

ADL (Anti-Defamation League)

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Washington, DC

March 16, 2022

10:00 a.m.



*Working to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure
Justice and fair treatment to all since 1913*

INTRODUCTION TO ADL

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” Today, ADL is a global leader in exposing extremism, delivering anti-bias education, and monitoring and fighting the spread of hate in our communities and online. For decades, one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, including white supremacists and other far-right violent extremists, producing research to inform the public of the scope of the threat, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry and elected leaders to promote best practices that can effectively address and counter these threats.

Domestic violent extremism and hate crimes have been on the rise in recent years. Reported hate crimes targeting Black and Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) individuals and communities increased significantly over the last two years, including the terrible ongoing bomb threats against Historically Black Colleges and Universities. The Jewish community continues to be a primary target of extremists. Our hearts are with the Colleyville, Texas community that was recently shaken by the trauma of being targeted by a terrorist who took worshipers hostage during a Sabbath service at a local synagogue, one that thankfully had security-related equipment and training – resources that many faith-based communities nationwide do not have access to.

Without a doubt, right-wing extremist violence is currently the greatest domestic terrorism threat to everyone in this country. From Charleston to Charlottesville, from Pittsburgh to Poway and El Paso, we have seen the deadly consequences of white supremacist extremism play out all over this country. Moreover, at ADL we are tracking the mainstreaming, normalizing, and localizing of the hate, disinformation, and toxic conspiracy theories that animate this extremism. We cannot afford to minimize this threat. We need a bipartisan “whole of government approach” – indeed, a “whole of society” approach – to counter it, and the work must start today.

CURRENT TRENDS

Overall Rise in Hate Crimes

As an initial matter, we know from the available data that hate crimes overall were at historic highs in 2020 as the pandemic raged. The FBI’s annual hate crimes report revealed that 2020 saw a 13 percent increase in reported hate crimes from the previous year and represented the highest total in almost two decades. A total of 8,263 hate crime incidents were reported, an increase from 7,314 in 2019. As has been the case consistently since hate crimes reporting began, race-based, and specifically anti-Black, hate crimes represented the largest portion of reported hate crimes. In 2020, there was a sharp increase in reported hate crimes targeting Black people; that number rose approximately 49 percent, from 1,930 in 2019 to 2,871. The number of reported anti-AAPI hate crimes increased significantly as well from 179 to 294. Reported gender-identity-based hate crimes also rose, from 198 to 266, which is the highest it has been since the FBI began collecting data on this category of hate crimes in 2013. Although reported “anti-Hispanic-or-Latino” hate crimes decreased slightly, the number is still the second highest it has been since 2010. Hate crimes targeting the Jewish community made up nearly 55 percent of all religion-based hate crimes in 2020. The increase in reported hate crimes came even though, for the third straight year, the number of law enforcement agencies providing data to the FBI declined.

However, the overall numbers reported by the FBI fail to tell the full story of hate crimes and bias-motivated incidents in this country. The FBI's hate crime data is based on voluntary reporting by local law enforcement agencies and appropriate characterization of crimes as having been perpetrated, at least in part, with bias motivation. For a variety of reasons, dozens of large cities either underreport or do not report hate crime data at all. For that reason, experts, including at ADL, know that the real volume and scope of hate crimes targeting all marginalized communities is even higher than the FBI reporting indicates.

Data collection efforts by other organizations also reveal significantly higher numbers of hate-motivated incidents, many of which do not rise to the level of a crime. For example, [Stop AAPI Hate](#) counted more than 10,000 hate incidents between March 2020 and September 2021 targeting AAPI persons and conducted a survey finding that nearly one in five Asian Americans experienced a hate incident during the past year. The potentially deadly nature of the attacks on this community was brought into stark relief in March 2021 when a shooter targeted three spas in the Atlanta metropolitan area, killing eight people, including six Asian women.

Colleyville and Antisemitic Violence

Antisemitism is an ongoing threat to the American Jewish community. According to the FBI's annual data on hate crimes, crimes targeting the Jewish community consistently constitute over half of all religion-based crimes. The number of hate crimes against Jews has ranged between 600 and 1,200 each year since the FBI began collecting data in the 1990s. There were 683 hate crimes against Jews in 2020, 963 in 2019 and 847 in 2018.

A violent attack against the Jewish community occurred just recently, on January 15, 2022, when a gunman entered Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, during services, taking three congregants and the rabbi as hostages. Though the standoff thankfully ended with all hostages freed and physically unharmed, the violent act reinforced the urgent need to address the threat of antisemitic violence – experienced by the Colleyville community and far too many others. The fact that the Colleyville attacker travelled from the United Kingdom underscores that there can be foreign influences on domestic terrorism, either through incitement, coordination, or direct participation.

Rising Antisemitism

ADL has recorded a 60 percent increase of antisemitic incidents over the past five years. While antisemitism has commonalities with racism, anti-Muslim bias, xenophobia, homophobia, transphobia, misogyny and other forms of hate and discrimination, it also has certain unique characteristics as a specific set of ideologies about Jews that has migrated across discourses – and across centuries. In almost every part of our society, this hatred has been conjured and adjusted to suit the values, belief, and fears of specific demographics and contexts. Thus, the underlying conspiracy theories employing Jew-hatred morph to fit the anxieties and upheavals of the time – for example, that Jews were responsible for the Black Death in medieval times and for “inventing,” spreading, or profiting from COVID-19 in the 21st century. Or that Jews exercise extraordinary power over governments, media, and finance – from the charges of a conspiracy to achieve world domination set forth in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion and used by the Nazis, to thinly veiled antisemitism blaming “globalists” and “cosmopolitan elites” for all the ills of the world and for conspiring to impose a “[New World Order](#).” We cannot fight

antisemitism without understanding how it is both intertwined with other forms of prejudice and how it is unique. ADL's resource, [Antisemitism Uncovered: A Guide to Old Myths in a New Era](#), offers comprehensive information about the history and current manifestations of antisemitism.

Each year, the ADL Center on Extremism tracks incidents of antisemitic harassment, vandalism, and assault in the United States. Since 1979, we have published this information in an annual [Audit of Antisemitic Incidents](#). In 2020, ADL tabulated 2,024 reported antisemitic incidents throughout the United States. This is a 4 percent decrease from the 2,107 incidents recorded in 2019 but is still the third-highest year on record since ADL began this tracking. Known extremist groups or individuals inspired by extremist ideology were responsible for 331 incidents in 2020, up from 270 incidents in 2019. This represents 16 percent of the total number of incidents in 2020.

More recently, analysis from the ADL Center on Extremism reveals that antisemitic incidents in the U.S. more than doubled during the May 2021 military conflict between Israel and Hamas and its immediate aftermath compared to the same period in 2020. After peaking during that period, incident levels gradually returned to a baseline level.

Threats to HBCUs

Over the last several weeks, America's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been targeted by widespread and repeated bomb threats. While the cases are still under investigation, law enforcement authorities reportedly believe the threats are racially motivated. It is no coincidence that HBCUs, a longstanding symbol of Black resilience and excellence, were targeted at the start of Black History Month and during a time of widespread and "equal opportunity" hate, which has affected marginalized communities nationwide.

Murder and Extremism: By the Numbers

[New research](#) from the ADL Center on Extremism finds that, in 2021, domestic extremists killed at least 29 people in the United States, in 19 separate incidents. This represents a modest increase from the 23 extremist-related murders documented in 2020 but is far lower than the number of murders committed in any of the five years prior (which ranged from 45 to 78). While this could be cause for optimism, more likely it is the result of COVID-19 lockdowns reducing mass gatherings and the increased attention of law enforcement following the January 6th, 2021 insurrection.

Virtually all of the murders (26 of 29) were committed by right-wing extremists, consistent with trends lasting more than a decade in this country. Of the 333 right-wing extremist-related killings over the last 10 years, at least 73 percent have been at the hands of white supremacists. It is for this reason that the Biden administration, joining other national security and domestic extremism experts, [deemed](#) "the two most lethal elements of today's domestic terrorism threat [to be] (1) racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists who advocate for the superiority of the white race and (2) anti-government or anti-authority violent extremists, such as militia violent extremists."

White Supremacist Propaganda

The ADL Center on Extremism has tracked a substantial increase in white supremacist propaganda efforts in the past two years, which includes the distribution of racist, antisemitic and anti-LGBTQ+ fliers, stickers, posters, banners and stenciled graffiti by various members of far right and white supremacist groups. According to [new research](#), last year marked the second-highest level of incidents reported since ADL began tracking such data – with an average of about 13 incidents per day in 2021, and nearly double the 2,724 cases reported in 2019. These incidents involved at least 38 known white supremacist groups across 49 states and the District of Columbia. In just the past few weeks dozens of additional incidents have been reported in at least 15 states, on college campuses and across entire neighborhoods. Most of those incidents were perpetrated by the virulently antisemitic Goyim Defense League, whose fliers blame Jews for spreading COVID, threatening the “white race” through increasing diversity, and having too much power, among other hateful tropes.

Propaganda gives white supremacists the ability to maximize media and online attention, while limiting the risk of individual accountability, negative media coverage, arrests, and public backlash that often accompanies more public events. The barrage of propaganda, which overwhelmingly features veiled white supremacist language with a “patriotic” slant, is an effort to normalize white supremacists’ message and bolster recruitment efforts while targeting marginalized communities including Jews, Black people, Muslims, non-white immigrants and LGBTQ+ people.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Addressing Modern Terrorist Threats

We need a whole-of-government approach to address the extremist threat that the Jewish community, and many others, are facing and will continue to face in the years to come. The framework that ADL has created – the PROTECT plan – is a comprehensive, seven-part plan to mitigate the threat posed by domestic extremism and domestic terrorism while protecting civil rights and civil liberties. Together, focusing on these seven categories can have an immediate and deeply significant impact in preventing and countering domestic terrorism – more so than any one action, policy, or law – and can do so while protecting civil rights and liberties and ensuring that government overreach does not harm the same vulnerable people and communities that these extremists target.

- **Prioritize Preventing and Countering Domestic Terrorism:** We urge Congress to adopt a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach to preventing and countering domestic terrorism.
- **Resource According to the Threat:** We must ensure that the authorities and resources the government uses to address violent threats are proportionate to the risk of the lethality of those threats. In other words, allocation of resources must never be politicized but rather based on transparent and objective security concerns.
 - Legislation that facilitates transparency in resourcing can help ensure this crucial oversight, such as the transparency mechanisms and related measures in the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act, H.R. 350 (DTPA). We urge Congress to pass

the DTPA immediately; doing so can help lay a foundation on which to build an effective and comprehensive approach to addressing the threat.

- **Oppose Extremists in Government Service:** It is essential that we recognize the potential for harm when extremists gain positions of power, including in government, law enforcement, and the military.
- **Take Domestic Terrorism Prevention Measures:** We must not wait until after someone has become an extremist or a terrorist attack has happened to act. Effective and promising prevention measures exist, which should be scaled.
- **End the Complicity of Social Media in Facilitating Extremism:** Congress must prioritize countering online extremism and ensuring that perpetrators who engage in unlawful activity online can be held accountable. Online platforms often lack adequate policies or enforcement practices to mitigate extremism and hate equitably and at scale. Federal and state laws and policies require significant updating to hold online platforms and individual perpetrators accountable for enabling hate, racism, and extremist violence across the internet. In March 2021, ADL announced [the REPAIR Plan](#), which offers a comprehensive framework for platforms and policymakers to take meaningful action to decrease online hate and extremism.
- **Create an Independent Clearinghouse for Online Extremist Content:** Congress should work with the Biden-Harris Administration to create a publicly funded, independent nonprofit center to track online extremist threat information in real-time and make referrals to social media companies and law enforcement agencies when appropriate.
- **Target Foreign White Supremacist Terrorist Groups:** Congress must recognize that white supremacist extremism is a major global threat of our era and mobilize with that mindset.

Nonprofit Security Grant Program

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is an essential tool in protecting nonprofits, including houses of worship and other faith-based organizations. The program can be used for training and equipment to secure facilities, such as synagogues like the one in Colleyville, Texas, whose leadership took advantage of the program. Far too many houses of worship do not. And those that do apply have a frustratingly low likelihood of receiving financial relief from the program for securing themselves. For houses of worship, community needs should be more front of mind than providing for their own security or raising funds for security precautions.

In the last grant cycle, 3,361 applicants requested \$399,763,916 in NSGP grants, according to FEMA. Congress had only funded the program at \$180 million, providing for a maximum of only 45 percent of security costs that nonprofits had assessed were necessary for their community's security. That funding gap represents almost \$220 million in unfunded liabilities for nonprofit organizations in an era of high and rising threats from domestic violent extremists. While the synagogue in Colleyville had fortunately been aware of this opportunity – and received some benefits from it – try to imagine all of the synagogues, churches, gurdwaras, and other community pillars lacking resources, and further, those that lack even the awareness of the program at all. While it might be fair to say that not all applications for funding are perfectly executed, it would also be fair to note that these are community institutions – not professional government contractors – navigating complex bureaucratic requirements when they should be focused on their

communities. In this era of extreme threats to houses of worship, our communities deserve more.

Congress took a significant step forward in increasing the appropriation for this program for FY 2022 to \$250 million. However, this still falls far short of the demonstrated need.

Recommendations for Reforming the Nonprofit Security Grant Program

NSGP poses a significant opportunity to help secure our communities. Even modest reforms can provide significant support. ADL recommends that Congress take on the following reforms:

- **Significantly increase the pool of available funding for NSGP:** Funding NSGP at \$360 million last year would have ensured that 90 percent of applicants received funding. For many grant programs, funding a small percentage of applications is a signal of the competitiveness of the program. However, NSGP does not fund nonprofits performing government services, it funds nonprofits who need government support. It should not be competitive, it should be helpful. We should expect even more applications in the future, as more organizations should be made aware of the program, and the threat trends show an increase in risk. As such, \$360 million is the minimum amount that community organizations need to secure themselves in this era of severe risk.
- **Scale outreach and engagement to increase the applicant pool:** Not enough states avail themselves of the program, and many community organizations are not aware of it. Following the Colleyville tragedy, ADL heard from many community partners that they were not aware of the funding available. While ADL can make partners aware of the opportunity – and urge state governments to increase their efforts within their states – DHS must step up. DHS should significantly increase engagement with communities and with state governments to broaden the number of applicants seeking support from the program.
- **Scale outreach and engagement to guide applicants:** Nonprofits like houses of worship are not government contractors; the burdensome bureaucratic requirements of federal funding applications may be familiar to organizations with direct experience applying for federal grants, but for most NSGP applicants, applying is a new and unusual process. As such, DHS should increase its guidance to potential applicants on how to be successful when applying for funds. Applying for NSGP grants should not be a competition, pitting congregation against congregation. It should be a way to support all communities under threat.
- **Broaden the spectrum of eligible grantee expenses:** NSGP funds can be used for security training and equipment to guard against threats that are “terroristic.” “Terroristic” is not a term many applicants may be familiar with. Moreover, it should be interpreted as broadly as possible, such as including threats from domestic extremist organizations based on the tactics those organizations use. As such, safeguarding against cybercrimes, such as hacking a website, and other targeted harassment that bears the hallmarks of the behavior of hate-based movements that sometimes use terrorism should be allowable expenses. The interpretation of guidance on expenses should track the guidance on threats provided by DHS and other law enforcement and intelligence entities, which note that domestic terrorism represents the top terrorist risk to Americans domestically. The full scope of domestic terrorist tactics should be considered when making programmatic decisions.
- **Provide full support to DHS to faithfully execute a scaled program:** Grant management is a technical skill, and oversight is incredibly important for large funds. DHS should not be

expected to adapt to the heightened threat environment without further resources to ensure funding is spent effectively and to provide necessary outreach. DHS should receive additional staff and other resources to administer the program, as well as new funding streams for additional outreach to potential applicants.

- **Ensure transparency and oversight in the administration of the program:** While DHS must be empowered to help community members secure themselves, it cannot be allowed to operate without careful oversight. We must acknowledge that some communities may feel less empowered, not more, when seeing DHS increase its resources. The program should be reviewed through a civil rights and civil liberties lens. Further, it is difficult for the public to determine how funding has been dispersed: DHS should release a public, annual report on the program, and Congress should ensure that the resources provided to DHS for this objective are being used proportionate to the evidence of terroristic threats.

In February 2022, Rep. Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS), Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, and Rep. John Katko (R-NY), Ranking Member of the Committee, announced the introduction of the Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act of 2022 (H.R. 6825), which would address many of these concerns and strengthen the program. Not only would this legislation increase funding for this crucial program to \$500 million annually, but it would create a dedicated office within FEMA to administer the program and provide greater outreach, engagement, education, technical assistance, and support to eligible nonprofits. ADL urges Congress to pass this legislation without delay.

Implementing a Comprehensive Approach to Preventing and Responding to Hate Crimes

Congress took a significant step forward in improving our nation's response to hate crimes by passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act in 2021, which included the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act. The bill included crucial measures to expedite an Attorney General review of hate crimes nationwide, require the promulgation of guidance to law enforcement agencies regarding best practices for establishing hate crime reporting tools and collecting data on these crimes, and created new grant programs to provide much-needed resources to establish state-run hate crime hotlines and improve hate crime reporting to the FBI. The Department of Justice has already made strong progress in implementing provisions of this law; however, full implementation of all of the important new grant programs requires that Congress appropriate funds for them. ADL urges Congress to appropriate \$15 million for grant programs to implement the National Incident-Based Reporting System, to create State-run hate crime reporting hotlines, and to conduct training and develop protocols for identifying, analyzing, investigating, and reporting hate crimes.

However, passing the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act should not represent the end of Congressional efforts to address hate crimes; there remains significant work to do to implement a comprehensive and data-informed approach to this devastating problem. A necessary prerequisite to developing such an approach is having complete and reliable data about hate crimes – data that does not currently exist. Multiple factors contribute to deficits in our knowledge about the full scope and nature of hate crimes, including victimized communities' distrust and avoidance of law enforcement agencies; lack of training for officers in recognizing and investigating bias motivations; and frontline agencies' limited capacity to maintain and share records with the FBI. Some of these challenges can begin to be addressed through full implementation of the NO HATE Act; however, there remains one key weakness in the current hate crime data collection program –

it relies on voluntary participation by state and local law enforcement. Congress must evaluate options for making hate crime reporting mandatory by all law enforcement agencies.

In addition to ensuring a robust system of hate crime reporting, we must also invest in community-centered approaches to preventing hate crimes from occurring in the first place. The communities that are most impacted by hate crimes must be positioned to lead efforts to develop policies and programmatic approaches to address this problem. One way that the Administration can immediately support this community-focused preventative work is through a revitalized Community Relations Service (CRS) at the Department of Justice. CRS is the only federal agency dedicated to working on the ground with community groups to resolve local conflicts and prevent and respond to hate crimes and incidents. CRS works to build relationships with community stakeholders before tragedy occurs, helping ensure that crisis response can be both timely and meaningful. CRS's focus on prevention provides a unique value-add to communities, bringing experts to help problem-solve and build local capacity to prevent and respond to conflict, tension, and bias-motivated incidents. CRS also provides crucial relationship-building programs designed to strengthen relationships between law enforcement and the community – work that is vital to effectively preventing and responding to hate crimes as many of the communities targeted by such violence often have mistrust of law enforcement rooted in historical and ongoing police violence against marginalized communities. ADL applauds the Administration's early efforts to revitalize this crucial agency and urges Congress to increase the annual funding for this agency to \$40 million. In addition, DOJ can help support community-led efforts to prevent hate crimes and address their root causes by giving priority for federal grant funding to those qualified institutions of higher education and nongovernmental organizations that propose to use funding to provide services that reduce the risk of hate crimes or to provide legal, material, social, and other support to people and institutions affected by hate crimes.



The Jewish Federations®
OF NORTH AMERICA
Washington Office

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.

March 16, 2022

The Honorable Gary C. Peters
Chairman
The Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
The Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Peters and Ranking Member Portman:

Thank you for holding today's hearing. Terrorists and domestic violent extremists are targeting houses of worship and other religious-based and charitable organizations.

The targeted violence against these institutions is regrettably -- and now predictably -- increasing at an alarming rate, and the justifications continue to ramp up for Congress to bolster and strengthen the Department of Homeland Security's Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) as a top priority of homeland security.

Only last Friday, the day Congress approved a \$70 million boost in NSGP spending, an arsonist attacked a synagogue and two churches in New Britain, Connecticut. Congregation Tephareth Israel synagogue and Saint Matthew Lutheran Church were damaged by fire, the synagogue extensively. First responders were also dispatched to nearby St. Joseph Church after its burglar alarm was set off in what appeared to be an attempted intrusion into a third religious target.

Last August, The Jewish Federation's CEO and president Eric Fingerhut testified before this Committee on the impacts and consequences of terrorist and violent extremist threats to the Jewish community and the critical importance of the NSGP program to securing the central fixtures of Jewish communal life, as well as those of our many interfaith partners.

Last month, shortly after the armed terrorist hostage crisis at the Beth Israel Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, Mr. Fingerhut testified again to these concerns before the House Homeland Security Committee. He remarked that the Colleyville event was reminiscent, in all the worst ways, of the 2006 deadly attack at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, the 2009 deadly attack on the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., the 2012 deadly attack on the Sikh Temple of (Oak Creek) Wisconsin, the 2014 deadly attack on the Jewish Community Center and retirement community in Overland Park, Kansas, the 2015 deadly attack on the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in Charleston, South Carolina, the 2018 deadly attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and the 2019 deadly attack on the Congregation Chabad in Poway, California.

The Colleyville attack further crystallized how difficult it is for law enforcement to detect and prevent these threats before they occur, requiring substantially increased government support for the physical security and security activities of houses of worship, religious-based organizations

and other targeted charitable institutions. We applaud Congress for making an important down payment on this commitment within the just-passed omnibus spending bill.

But as Eric Fingerhut also testified before this and the House Committee, the NSGP program is behind the curve structurally and requires Congress to further address, holistically, several insufficiencies in the program's management and administration; outreach, education, and technical assistance; and oversight and data collection, in addition to appropriating adequate and stable funding levels.

As the Committee further examines the violent extremist threat to houses of worship, today, we urge its questioning of the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) stewardship of the NSGP program and to seek clarity and assurances from the Agency that it is committed to directing the necessary support mechanisms and personnel to ensure the program is appropriately positioned to handle the increased program funding and volume. As a major stakeholder of the program, we know from experience that the long-term success of the program requires much more from FEMA (and the State Administrative Agencies) in this regard.

In this same vein, we know that fundamentally the NSGP funding, program management, and administration must go hand-in-hand for the program to succeed. This is why we strongly endorse H.R. 6825, the "Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act of 2022." The House Homeland Security Committee favorably reported this new, bipartisan legislation earlier this month, which constitutes a comprehensive redress of several challenges and needed improvements to the NSGP program. The bill closely aligns with the recommendations made by Mr. Fingerhut before both Homeland Security committees. The country requires a meaningful response to the growing security crisis facing our religious institutions and charitable organizations. For these reasons, we respectfully urge you and the members of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to support this important legislation and work closely with the House Committee to expedite the bill, as the Committees successfully did with the passage of the "Securing American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2019."

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Robert B. Goldberg
Senior Director, Legislative Affairs
The Jewish Federations of North America

The Jewish Federations of North America represents 146 Jewish Federations and over 300 Network communities, which raise more than \$3 billion annually for social welfare, social services, and educational needs. The Federation movement, collectively among the top 10 charities on the continent, protects and enhances the well-being of Jews worldwide through the values of Tikkun Olam (repairing the world), Tzedakah (charity and social justice) and Torah (Jewish learning).

**Policy Package Submitted for the Record by the
Muslim Public Affairs Council**

**Before the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland
Security and Government Affairs**

**For a Hearing on Violent Extremism and Terrorism:
Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship
and Public Spaces**

March 16, 2022



**MUSLIM PUBLIC
AFFAIRS COUNCIL**



**Written Statement of Mohammad H. Ali
Director of Policy and Government Relations
Muslim Public Affairs Council**

Submitted to the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

**For a Hearing on Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of
Worship and Public Spaces**

March 16, 2022

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished members of the U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs, on behalf of the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), I thank you for convening this critical hearing and for giving us the opportunity to submit this statement for the record.

Since 1988, MPAC has advocated for policies to advance the civil liberties of American Muslims, to defend the freedom of religion, and to ensure equitable application of our nation's greatest ideals of justice for all.

Houses of worship have long provided solace, hope, and refuge to people of all faiths and backgrounds, sheltering them from the stresses and threats of the outside world. They truly embody the timeless American ideal captured on the Statue of Liberty: "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the wretched refuse of your teeming shore." Now, those very walls that have for years protected worshippers, wayfarers, and people from all walks of life are no longer safe havens.

In recent years, there has been a clear and persistent threat to houses of worship. From Oak Creek to Charleston, and from Minnesota to Colleyville, mosques, synagogues, temples, and churches across America have been victims of deadly attacks. We as a nation must come together to protect our fellow Americans whilst they are in the vulnerable act of praying

Mosques and American Muslim organizations have been a constant target for white supremacists and racially motivated violent extremists. No community should live with the constant fear of attack for simply being who they are. Yet, too many of our institutions have had to deal with threats and humiliation on the basis of our religion.

Threats or attacks against houses of worship not only cause deep trauma to its direct victims and immediate community, but they also impact members of the faith nationwide, sending them a message that they are hated and do not belong in America. As such, these crimes are a direct assault on our pluralism and cohesiveness as an American people.

In this period of increased threats against houses of worship, MPAC has worked to bolster the safety and security of American Muslim communities and institutions nationwide. In 2019, MPAC President Salam Al-Marayati joined the Homeland Security Advisory Council's (HSAC) Task Force on the Prevention of Targeted Violence against houses of worship as Co-Vice Chair to do exactly that. The task force published¹ several key findings in a report which we believe are still applicable today, including the need for a consistent and proactive approach to training faith-based organizations (FBOs) for security, the need for FBOs and local law enforcement to build better relationships with one another, and improve access to FEMA Grants.

That same year, MPAC worked with the DHS Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) to organize a three-part program series to share CISA's security resources and directly connect community leaders with their local Protect Security Advisors (PSAs).

As a faith-based organization that has received multiple threats in the past and has worked for over three decades to bring forth better policies and share best practices to secure houses of worship and faith-based organizations, MPAC strongly supports the Pray Safe Act, which will reduce and prevent violence against houses of worship by streamlining access to critical security information and resources from the federal government.

MPAC is heartened by the bipartisan leadership on the Pray Safe Act and thanks Senator Portman and Senator Hassan for sponsoring this important legislation. We urge the Senate to swiftly pass this bill.

¹ https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/preventing_targeted_violence_against_faith-based_communities_subcommittee_0.pdf



**Statement for the Record from the Sikh Coalition
Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs
United States Senate**

**Hearing on Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of
Worship and Public Spaces**

March 16, 2022

The Sikh Coalition respectfully submits this statement for the record in connection with the above-referenced hearing before this Committee. As an organization that represents the Sikh community in the United States and addresses hate-related attacks against the Sikh American community since 9/11, we write to share our concern regarding the rise in violence against Sikhs and other minorities.

Background

The Sikh community in the United States has long faced discrimination and bigotry. Sikhs have faced hate violence in the United States since arriving in this country in the late 1800s. A new wave of hate began, however, in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11 attacks; the Sikh Coalition tracked more than 300 hate incidents in the first month after that terrible day, and the first deadly hate crime after 9/11 saw a Sikh American named Balbir Singh Sodhi murdered outside his gas station in Mesa, Arizona on September 15, 2011.¹ More than 20 years later, many still wrongfully associate anti-Sikh hate violence with “mistaken identity”—that is, the notion that Sikhs are targeted because they are believed to be Muslim—but defaulting to this framework fails to account for the other bias-related motivations behind violence against Sikhs, and often falsely implies that there is a group that *should* be targeted by those who lash out in hate.² Hate crimes, including attacks against minority institutions, like houses of worship, terrorize not only the targeted individual and their families, but entire communities that are similarly situated. Additionally, our nation’s limited efforts to address hate crimes and bias incidents fosters an environment where hate actors continue to escalate their attacks against minority communities.

¹ *Hate killed my brother 4 days after 9/11. What has changed (and hasn’t) 20 years later*, azcentral (Sep. 9, 2021), available at <https://www.azcentral.com/story/opinion/op-ed/2021/09/09/hate-killed-balbir-singh-sodhi-after-sept-11-what-changed/5773998001/>.

² *Sikhs in America: A History of Hate*, ProPublica (Aug. 4, 2017), available at <https://www.propublica.org/article/sikhs-in-america-hate-crime-victims-and-bias>.



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We believe that the challenges that Sikhs face often foreshadow systemic problems for the rest of the nation. The worst attack on an American house of worship in nearly 50 years occurred on August 5, 2012, when a white supremacist murdered seven Sikhs at a gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) in Oak Creek, Wisconsin. The shooting, perpetrated by a gunman with white nationalist ties, killed six Sikh worshippers at the time (with a seventh victim passing from his injuries in 2020), injured several others, and forever altered the lives of community members across the nation. Since the Oak Creek shooting, additional gurdwaras and other minority houses of worship throughout the nation have been actively targeted by vandalism, arson, bomb threats, bioterrorism, and mass shootings.

Following the Oak Creek shooting, the Sikh Coalition, in collaboration with other advocacy organizations, advocated for updating the FBI's hate crime reporting codes to more accurately capture anti-bias incidents, including anti-Sikh incidents for the first time.³ Since then, the FBI's annual hate crime report consistently ranks Sikhs among the top five most targeted religious communities—but when one controls for estimated population sizes of the religious minorities, it quickly becomes clear that Sikhs remain likely more vulnerable than any other religious population in the country.

Since the reporting of hate crimes to the FBI remains voluntary, federal hate crime statistics remain woefully inadequate. According to the most recent reporting by the Bureau of Justice Statistics, there were an estimated 246,900 hate crimes transpiring annually within the United States from 2005 to 2019.⁴ The FBI's most recent annual hate crime report in 2020, by contrast, reported only 3 percent of this estimate, with just 8,263 hate crime incidents documented. With just 16 percent of participating agencies reporting hate crimes data, it is apparent that the current model of voluntary reporting and hate crime response training yields very limited statistics.⁵ The large gaps in hate crime reporting and failures to prioritize hate crime threats remain among our nation's greatest security threats; this, and the broader danger of white supremacist extremism that continues to target our and other communities, requires further substantial action by Congress.

The delays in action to address hate crimes and white supremacist violence against individuals have resulted in more acts of hate being directed at minority institutions, including our houses of

³ *Making History, First Sikh Testifies at U.S. Senate Hearing*, The Sikh Coalition (Sep. 20, 2012), available at <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/blog/2012/making-history-first-sikh-testifies-at-us-senate-hearing/>.

⁴ *Hate Crime Victimization, 2005-2019*, Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (Sep. 2021) available at <https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/hate-crime-victimization-2005-2019>.

⁵ *2020 Hate Crime Statistics* (2021), Federal Bureau of Investigations (2021), available at <https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>.



worship. In the years since Oak Creek, the Sikh Coalition has tracked an alarming increase in attacks against gurdwaras—particularly over the past five years. In September of 2017, a white man defaced a gurdwara in Hollywood, California, calling for the nuking and death of Sikhs and threatened to slit the throat of an onlooker.⁶ In July of 2019, a gurdwara in Hughson, California, was broken into; the Sikh caretaker was assaulted and told to “go back” to a foreign country.⁷ In January of 2020, another gurdwara in Orangevale, California, was vandalized with white nationalist graffiti⁸ after its grand opening; reporters later discovered that a prominent and dangerous white supremacist lived within a mile of the gurdwara.⁹ In August of last year, a gurdwara under construction in Long Island, New York, was vandalized with hateful slurs and pro-Trump messages.¹⁰ And in September of last year, a gurdwara in Federal Way, Washington, was vandalized and burglarized.¹¹ We fear that without improved federal intervention, more gurdwaras and minority houses of worship will continue to see hate appear on their doorsteps.

We remain concerned that our federal government is not adequately responding to the threat of white supremacist extremism. Only recently has the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) begun to acknowledge that white supremacists are the most pressing and lethal domestic security threat facing our nation.¹² According to the most recent DHS terrorism bulletin, this threat is only increasing as individuals are radicalized due to false or misleading narratives, conspiracy theories, and other forms of mis- dis- and malinformation.¹³ The bulletin goes on to state that violent extremists inspired by a range of grievances and ideologies continue to target crowded venues, public gathering places, and houses of worship.

⁶ *LAPD seeks suspect who vandalized Los Feliz Sikh temple, threatened witness*, LA Times (Sep. 18, 2017), available at <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-sikh-temple-hate-crime-20170918-story.html>.

⁷ *Sikh Priest Attacked Inside Hughson Home Told ‘Go Back, Go Back’*, CBS Sacramento (Jul. 26, 2019), available at <https://sacramento.cbslocal.com/2019/07/26/sikh-priest-attacked-go-back/>.

⁸ *Swastikas, ‘white power’ spray-painted outside of Sikh temple in Orangevale*, Fox 40 (Jan. 13, 2020), available at <https://fox40.com/news/local-news/swastikas-white-power-spray-painted-outside-of-sikh-temple-in-orangevale/>.

⁹ *Leader Of Dylann Roof-Worshipping Neo-Nazi Group Under Police Investigation*, Huffington Post (Jul 27, 2020), available at https://www.huffpost.com/entry/andrew-casarez-neo-nazi-police-investigation_n_5f1f510cc5b638cfc48ba4.

¹⁰ *Racist, pro-Trump vandal targets Sikh temple on Long Island*, Daily News (Sep. 5, 2021), available at <https://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/nyc-crime/ny-racist-vandalism-sikh-temple-long-island-donald-trump-20210805-hovi7bvebabnkcxbhs72qc43e-story.html>.

¹¹ *Police investigating after Federal Way Sikh center vandalized*, The Seattle Times (Sep. 19, 2021), available at <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/law-justice/police-investigating-after-federal-way-sikh-center-vandalized/>.

¹² *DHS draft document: White supremacists are greatest terror threat*, Politico (Sep. 4, 2020), available at <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/04/white-supremacists-terror-threat-dhs-409236>.

¹³ *National Terrorism Advisory System Bulletin - February 07, 2022 02:00 pm*, Department of Homeland Security (Feb. 7, 2022), available at <https://www.dhs.gov/ntas/advisory/national-terrorism-advisory-system-bulletin-february-07-2022>.



Policy Recommendations

The Sikh Coalition recommends that Congress take the following actions to address white supremacist extremism and other hate violence against our communities.

Address Hate Crimes to Mitigate The Threat of White Supremacist Violence

1. **Investigate the feasibility of mandating data collection on hate crimes to eliminate underreporting by law enforcement agencies and better inform targeted communities about the threats they face.** Data has to drive policy. The current state of voluntary hate crime reporting to the FBI yields limited and untimely data that permits hate to proliferate and inflict great harm upon targeted communities.
2. **Ensure that the COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act, and its provisions from the Jabara-Heyer NO HATE Act, are being effectively implemented with adequate funding.** The recently enacted law would modernize the federal hate crime reporting system and encourage state and local law enforcement to report hate crime statistics to the federal government. It will also create opportunities to rehabilitate hate crime offenders by giving them the option of learning more about the community they targeted and participating in community service projects. Lastly, this bill will create better hate crime victim support and assistance services like hate crime reporting hotlines. Without adequate funding, however, these policy improvements cannot go into effect.
3. **Reintroduce and pass the Justice for Victims of Hate Crimes Act to ensure that hate crime perpetrators can no longer avoid federal prosecution by allowing for hate crime charges when bias is part of other motivating factors.** Current law requires an act of bigotry to be the singular motivating factor of the crime. This creates a loophole in federal hate crime prosecutions, given that bias is often just one of many factors in the targeting of an individual for a hate crime. This bill would close that loophole and allow for mixed-motive prosecutions at the federal level. Without intervention, justice will continue to be denied to hate crime victims, and perpetrators will not be held accountable for their acts of hate.
4. **Make Department of Justice (DOJ) grants to address hate crimes available to community organizations.** Programs such as the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program and Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Program can be used to prevent and address hate crimes, including crimes targeting houses



of worship. Future appropriations should ensure that these programs continue to be accessible to community organizations. Doing so recognizes that communities targeted for hate must be at the center of policies and programs intended to address hate violence and ensures that those communities have the necessary resources and support.

Address Domestic Terrorism Concerns From a Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Perspective

1. **Pass the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act (S. 963) to improve the focus of the federal government's efforts to address white supremacist violence.** The failure to effectively address white supremacist violence and extremism are not due to a lack of criminal statutes, but a failure to use existing resources effectively. This bill would implement common-sense processes that will better combat white supremacist extremists while not falsely focusing on minority racial and religious groups, who have too often become targets of law enforcement and government action in the post-9/11 context. It would require federal agencies to monitor, investigate, and prosecute cases of domestic terrorism and specifically focus their resources on the most significant threats, which currently include violent white supremacist extremists. The bill would also require the DOJ to review hate crimes to determine whether the incident also constitutes a domestic terrorism-related incident.
2. **Reject terrorism prevention programs that have been based on junk science and disproportionately harm Black and brown communities.** Initiatives that are designed to prevent violent extremism and terrorism must also ensure that the civil rights and civil liberties of all communities are protected. Prior programs--such as the Countering Violent Extremism Program (CVE) and subsequent Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP)--have disproportionately harmed minority communities by surveilling them on the basis that they posed a threat. To ensure that these types of programs do not continue to violate the civil rights and liberties of communities, Congress should increase their oversight of DHS, including the Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3).
3. **Conduct hearings and pursue legislation to address the role of social media platforms as conduits for white nationalist and supremacist groups to communicate, recruit, and fund their activities.** Holding hearings on the activity of violent white supremacist extremist organizations can help inform prevention and deradicalization strategies that do not infringe upon constitutionally protected activity.



Protect Communities and Institutions from Violent White Supremacist Extremism

1. **Ensure the Non-Profit Security Grant Program (NSGP) is more equitable and accessible to underserved and targeted communities.** The recently introduced Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act (H.R. 6825) would provide more funding to the NSGP and make it easier for gurdwaras and other houses of worship to obtain these resources. The Sikh Coalition urges Congress to pass this important bill immediately to protect our communities from another hate-fueled mass casualty event.

Additionally, Congress must ensure that smaller congregations, like those of many gurdwaras, do not continue to face barriers that prohibit them from applying to the NSGP. The narrow filing timelines and level of technical expertise required for the complicated application process effectively limit the reach of NSGP funding, excluding the communities that need it the most (who often rely on volunteer labor or have limited English proficiency). Even when the grants are submitted, there is often no information provided as to why they are rejected—which in turn limits applicants' chances to improve future applications. Ensuring equitable access to the NSGP should be a top priority. Congress should also act to remediate the NSGP by expanding the filing application timelines, simplifying the application requirements, providing technical assistance programs to houses of worship, and ensuring equitable access of funding to smaller congregations that are vulnerable to hate crimes and white supremacist violence. The program also requires significantly more funding to protect more houses of worship across the nation.

2. **Continue to increase funding for community relations services to address the threats facing our communities.** Community programs such as the DOJ Community Relations Service (CRS) are vital to promoting a greater understanding of minority communities. CRS develops critical resources, convenes forums on protecting houses of worship, convenes community stakeholder listening sessions, develops cultural competency resources for the Sikh and Muslim communities, and provides rapid response assistance after hate crime incidents. Continued funding for this program helps ensure that misconceptions about Sikhs and other communities do not escalate into violence. CRS also helps communities develop the capacity to more effectively prevent and respond to violent hate crimes.

Conclusion

Sikh houses of worship—like other minority institutions—remain under threat. The Sikh Coalition is grateful for the opportunity to submit this statement for the hearing record and looks forward to working with government, civil society, and communities nationwide to eliminate bigotry, hate



crimes, and violent extremism in the United States. If you have questions about these recommendations or seek additional information, please contact Sim J. Singh Attariwala at advocacy@sikhcoalition.org.

Thank you for considering our views on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Sim J. Singh".

Sim J. Singh Attariwala
Senior Policy and Advocacy Manager
The Sikh Coalition

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to Mr. Ryan Young
From Senator Rob Portman**

**“Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to
Houses of Worship and Public Spaces”
March 16, 2022**

Afghanistan Evacuees

The February 15, 2022 Department of Defense (DOD)’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report, *Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan*, found that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) failed to adequately screen the over 80,000 Afghan evacuees paroled into the United States during Operation Allies Welcome. Specifically, the report details how the tactical databases – containing biometric data, collected over a period of 20 years, including from terrorists who created or deployed explosives or who were captured on the battlefield – were never used in the screening process for the evacuees ahead of their release into the United States. According to the OIG, this is due to the lack of coordination, communication, and information sharing between DOD, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and DHS.

The report also revealed that, as of December 2021, at least 50 evacuees were found by DOD to have derogatory information in these tactical databases and were potentially significant security concerns. This discovery by DOD was flagged only after DHS paroled the evacuees into the United States. Additionally, the report indicated that the review by DOD was still ongoing and would not be completed until sometime in March 2022. In a recent briefing with Committee staff, DOD OIG employees confirmed that DOD had informally notified several agencies, including the FBI and DHS, that there were evacuees with such derogatory information.

1. What is the total number of evacuees, paroled into the United States that were identified with derogatory information in these DOD databases?
 - a. Regarding these evacuees:
 - i. How many can the FBI currently locate?
 - ii. How many of these evacuees traveled to the United States without official identification records? Of those who traveled without such records, are all their true identities known to the FBI? If not, how many are utilizing an alias or other false biographic information and how many of those had records created by U.S. officials using such false biographic information?
 - iii. How many terrorist investigations has the FBI opened?
 - iv. How many nominations have been made by the FBI, or other federal law enforcement agencies, to the Terrorist Screening Center for watch-listing purposes?
 - v. How many have been interviewed and exonerated for not being a security concern?

- vi. How many have been detained?
 - vii. How many have been deported or sent to a location outside the United States?
 - viii. How many does the FBI consider Known or Suspected Terrorists (KSTs)?
 - ix. How many are confirmed members of, or associated with, terrorist organizations such as Islamic State – Khorasan Province, al-Qaeda, or the Taliban?
2. What steps will the FBI take to ensure the Bureau's screening and vetting practices, as well as partner agencies including the National Counterterrorism Center, utilize all available DOD databases, including those containing biometric data?

NOTE: If necessary, some of this information can be transmitted in classified form to the Committee's security officer, Laura Kilbride.

Terrorist Incident in Colleyville, Texas

- 1. In January, a foreign terrorist attacked a synagogue in the United States. This incident reminds us that foreign terrorist attacks are not a thing of the past, and that houses of worship in this country face continued threats of violence from a variety of bad actors. In what ways are terrorists overseas seeking to gain entry to the United States?
- 2. Our intelligence and counterterrorism efforts failed to detect that Malik Faisal Akram posed a terrorist threat. He applied for the Visa Waiver Program via an Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA, application. When asked to self-report, he lied about his criminal history and terrorist activities. Are countries that participate in our Visa Waiver Program providing a satisfactory amount of intelligence to the United States regarding their citizens' criminal and terrorist histories?
 - a. The United Kingdom investigated this man for terrorism in the past. Why didn't they share that with the United States?
 - b. Since the attack, has the United States worked to improve intelligence-and information-sharing practices with the United Kingdom?

Interagency Coordination

There are a lot of stakeholders involved in foreign travel to the United States. CBP handles the Visa Waiver Program and ESTA applications, the State Department handles visas for those who aren't eligible under the Visa Waiver Program, and the FBI is in charge of maintaining the terrorist watchlist.

- 1. What is your respective role in this intelligence-sharing environment, as it pertains to detecting threats posed by foreign travel to the United States?

2. How would you grade the current information-sharing arrangement for preventing terrorists from entering the country?
3. How can we improve information and intelligence sharing within this broad ecosystem of stakeholders?

Terrorism and Violent Extremism

It's important for Congress, especially this Committee, to recognize that we cannot hyper-focus on certain threat actors and neglect others. Terrorists are motivated by a vast array of violent ideologies and personal grievances, and those motivations are becoming increasingly blended together in what experts describe as a "salad bar" of ideologies.

1. How is your office working to gather intelligence on international terrorists and domestic terrorists?
 - a. Is your office properly resourced to focus on both?
2. In analyzing attacks against houses of worship and other soft targets that were discussed at the hearing, does the threat actor's ideological motivation make a difference in how the FBI approaches it, or in the harm caused by the attack?
 - a. Is one inherently more or less dangerous than the other?
3. The Jewish community faces threats from across the ideological spectrum. White supremacists, far-left extremists, and jihadi terrorists have all sought to harm Jews. How can we keep our Jewish Americans safe and prevent these threats of antisemitic violence in the future?

Pray Safe Act

1. Ranking Member Portman's bipartisan bill, the Pray Safe Act, was introduced last year and would direct DHS to establish a clearinghouse of resources for houses of worship and faith-based organizations, so that they can better access security best practices, information on grant programs like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), and training opportunities. How important is it that our religious communities have access to this information, especially on safety and security best practices, from the federal government?

The witness failed to respond to these questions by the end of the Administration on January 20, 2025. If responses are received after time of printing, they will be on file with the Committee for public review.

**Post-Hearing Questions for the Record
Submitted to the Honorable Ryan Young
From Senator Josh Hawley**

**“Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to
Houses of Worship and Public Spaces”
March 16, 2022**

1. Does the FBI consider Malik Faisal Akram’s attack in Colleyville, TX an attack by an Islamic terrorist against the Jewish community?
 - a. What definition does the FBI use for “anti-semitism”?
 - b. Does the FBI consider that attack to be an act of “anti-Semitism,” as that term is defined by the FBI?
2. What information does the FBI have on Akram’s history of anti-Semitic statements and activities?
3. What lessons did the FBI learn from its resolution of the hostage crisis in Colleyville, TX?

The witness failed to respond to these questions by the end of the Administration on January 20, 2025. If responses are received after time of printing, they will be on file with the Committee for public review.

Responses to Post-Hearing Questions for the Record from Stephanie Dobitsch

Question#:	1
Topic:	Information Sharing
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: The February 15, 2022 Department of Defense (DOD)’s Office of Inspector General (OIG) Report, Evaluation of the Screening of Displaced Persons from Afghanistan, found that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) failed to adequately screen the over 80,000 Afghan evacuees paroled into the United States during Operation Allies Welcome. Specifically, the report details how the tactical databases – containing biometric data, collected over a period of 20 years, including from terrorists who created or deployed explosives or who were captured on the battlefield – were never used in the screening process for the evacuees ahead of their release into the United States. According to the OIG, this is due to the lack of coordination, communication, and information sharing between DOD, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and DHS.

The report also revealed that, as of December 2021, at least 50 evacuees were found by DOD to have derogatory information in these tactical databases and were potentially significant security concerns. This discovery by DOD was flagged only after DHS paroled the evacuees into the United States. Additionally, the report indicated that the review by DOD was still ongoing and would not be completed until sometime in March 2022. In a recent briefing with Committee staff, DOD OIG employees confirmed that DOD had informally notified several agencies, including the FBI and DHS, that there were evacuees with such derogatory information.

Under Recommendation 2, the DOD OIG Report urges DOD and DHS to develop procedures to share information on Afghan evacuees. The recommendation currently remains unresolved. Does this mean that the evacuees DHS paroled into the United States after the initial wave of over 80,000 were also not screened against these DOD tactical databases?

Response: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has serious concerns regarding the accuracy of some of the findings in the U.S Department of Defense (DoD) Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report. The evacuees referenced above were identified as having derogatory information and placed on the DoD Biometric Watchlist after they had arrived in the United States. In other words, this data was not available at the time of application and travel. As is routine, whenever new derogatory information is available, DHS and its partners work to fully analyze, investigate, and act upon it, as appropriate.

Additionally, the overwhelming majority of derogatory information held by DoD is available to DHS for screening and vetting purposes. The information not available to DHS includes some foreign partner data that, as a matter of policy, may not be shared with U.S. agencies outside of the DoD, such as DHS. DHS has found that most of the entries for these individuals in the DoD

Question#:	1
Topic:	Information Sharing
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Biometric Watchlist, while perhaps informative for DoD, concern issues that are irrelevant for purposes of considering their potential parole into the United States.

Finally, the information sharing agreement referenced in the DoD IG report has already been extended and will continue to be, as appropriate. DHS participates in regular discussions with DoD to evaluate the data shared and our information sharing agreements and operational protocols are adjusted, as appropriate. DHS participation includes the National Vetting Center (NVC), which facilitates the sharing of sensitive information between vetting agencies and national security partners, including elements of the Intelligence Community (IC) and law enforcement agencies.

Question#:	2
Topic:	Evacuee Vetting
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: Understanding that, per the DOD OIG, the lack of adequate vetting and screening of Afghan evacuees created potentially significant security concerns, will DHS commit to in-person vetting, including positively identifying each evacuee, and screening biometric data collected by DOD from the battlefield for all future Afghans seeking to relocate into the United States, but prior to being admitted?

Response: There is robust screening and vetting conducted on Afghans who are being evacuated. Before being cleared for travel to the United States, Afghan evacuees submit to collection and review of biometric (e.g., facial images and fingerprints) and biographic (e.g., name, date of birth, and ID number) information at international transit points. Biometric data collected is compared against DoD, DHS, and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) repositories and, as previously stated, the overwhelming majority of derogatory information held by DoD is also available directly in DHS systems. Biographic information is vetted by National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), FBI, and other IC partners. Only evacuees who clear those checks are approved for onward travel to the United States. All Afghan evacuees paroled into the US are also subject to additional security vetting to supplement their initial overseas vetting with more fulsome information and are subject to additional recurrent vetting for the duration of their parole.

Question#:	3
Topic:	Evacuee Locations
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: The OIG reports that most of the evacuees identified as having potentially significant security concerns could not be located due to the failure by DHS to update location information in such evacuee records. What is the number of evacuees that DHS cannot verify the location of?

Given this is a condition of parole, what steps will DHS take to determine the location, with timely updates as needed, for all the evacuees, including those flagged by DOD as potentially significant security concerns?

Response: DHS has significant concerns with the accuracy of several of the DoD OIG's findings. Neither DHS nor the Unified Coordination Group, which was responsible for administering Operation Allies Welcome, was consulted when DoD attempted to determine the location of the individuals referenced in the DoD OIG report. Thus, DHS cannot confirm the accuracy of the DoD OIG's statement at this time.

Following the publication of the report, DoD provided DHS with a list of individuals with potential security concerns whose location is not known to DoD, which DHS is reviewing. Individuals identified through this review as having derogatory information are placed on DHS and DoD watchlists, and appropriate law enforcement and immigration officials are notified if any of these individuals is arrested or seeks an immigration benefit.

Question#:	4
Topic:	Intelligence Sharing I
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: Has DHS shared intelligence or other information with state and local law enforcement pertaining to these potentially significant security threats posed by certain evacuees, as identified by DOD?

Response: DHS defers to the FBI for questions regarding the sharing of information concerning specific individuals with state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners. DHS has discussed the concerns regarding vetting of Afghan evacuees with SLTT partners in multiple forums, including through regular discussions with SLTT law enforcement executives, as well as calls and briefings to broader SLTT, fusion center, and homeland security partners, all at both the unclassified and classified levels. In addition, the DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) has provided several briefings to SLTT partners on potential threats posed by evacuees who may have connections to international terrorism and highlighted the potential strategic impacts of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan to the terrorist environment in the homeland in finished intelligence products.

Question: If so, please provide a copy of such intelligence or information to the committee.

If not, please provide an explanation for not sharing this intelligence or information.

Response: The DHS I&A products referenced above will be provided to the Committee staff.

Question#:	5
Topic:	Entry to the United States
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: In January, a foreign terrorist attacked a synagogue in the United States. This incident reminds us that foreign terrorist attacks are not a thing of the past, and that houses of worship in this country face continued threats of violence from a variety of bad actors. In what ways are terrorists overseas seeking to gain entry to the United States?

Response: International terrorists continue to seek a variety of lawful methods to travel to the United States, including by attempting to obtain US visas, traveling under the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) (as in the case of the Colleyville, TX attacker), and applying for asylum at US ports of entry. I&A judges that, foreign terrorists continue to hone their abilities to facilitate international travel, expand their networks, raise funds, and otherwise seek to improve their ability to target the United States. Individuals with potential terrorism concerns who seek to lawfully enter the United States typically seek tourist visas, the most common type of visa for all populations. DHS continues to work with IC partners to identify and operationalize any relevant information that can inform DHS screening and vetting operations to identify and mitigate the potential threats from this travel.

Question#:	6
Topic:	Intelligence Sharing II
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: Our intelligence and counterterrorism efforts failed to detect that Malik Faisal Akram posed a terrorist threat. He applied for the Visa Waiver Program via an Electronic System for Travel Authorization, or ESTA, application. When asked to self-report, he lied about his criminal history and terrorist activities. Are countries that participate in our Visa Waiver Program providing a satisfactory amount of intelligence to the United States regarding their citizens' criminal and terrorist histories?

Response: Each VWP member country is required to provide terrorist identity information and criminal records for watchlisting purposes. The amount and type of information received from each country varies depending on the country's privacy laws and the terms of the specific information sharing agreement between the VWP member country and the United States. VWP countries must meet and maintain high standards in security and law enforcement practices, as required by statutory provisions and programmatic guidelines aligning with best practices in global security. Each VWP member country provides information that meets the criteria of those respective laws and agreements.

DHS routinely assesses programmatic requirements for ways to strengthen the security partnerships between the United States and VWP member countries. This assessment is ongoing and routinely identifies newly available technology that can support today's travel volumes and DHS's mission. As an example, DHS recently introduced a requirement that existing and aspiring VWP member countries establish an Enhanced Border Security Partnership (EBSP). Under a EBSP, DHS will conduct a biometric check against a VWP member country's biometric data to authenticate a VWP traveler's identity, and quickly and timely receive immigration and criminal history information relevant to border, immigration, and related law enforcement encounters. EBSPs will serve as an additional layer of security to enable DHS to confirm that each VWP traveler meets admissibility requirements or is eligible for benefits or protections in the United States. This capability will be available to multiple DHS agencies, including U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and ICE, and interagency partners in assessing benefit and protection applications and in conducting investigations or enforcement activities.

DHS continues, in parallel, to assess what additional steps can be taken to increase access to biographic information known to our foreign partners in the security screening environment.

Question#:	7
Topic:	Intelligence Sharing III
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: The United Kingdom investigated this man for terrorism in the past. Why didn't they share that with the United States?

Response: The United Kingdom (UK) shares terrorism and law enforcement information in accordance with US-UK bilateral information sharing agreements. Under current information sharing agreements and procedures, DHS would need some reason to suspect an individual of wrongdoing or suspicious activity to request information on the individual's criminal history. As part of the process that applies routinely to every individual who travels to the United States under the VWP, the individual was vetted through numerous law enforcement and intelligence databases at various stages. In this case, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) had no reason to suspect this individual of any wrongdoing or that he presented a security threat to the United States and therefore had no grounds to request information from the UK.

DHS understands now that the individual may have had a UK criminal record that precedes a 2006 UK retention policy change that may have led to the record being suppressed. Prior to early 2006, certain records may have been suppressed from the UK Criminal Record Information System after a certain period of time depending on the offense. While the U.S. Government is still looking into the matter, DHS reiterates that no derogatory information associated with this individual was found prior to his travel to the United States or upon his arrival at the U.S. Port of Entry.

Question: Since the attack, has the United States worked to improve intelligence-and information-sharing practices with the United Kingdom?

Response: In March 2022, DHS leadership hosted UK Home Office leadership for the U.S.-UK Joint Contact Group (JCG). The JCG provides strategic direction for US-UK homeland security cooperation and collaboration. During the meeting, the U.S. and UK discussed the close partnership between DHS and the UK Home Office and opportunities for increased counterterrorism cooperation through information sharing. DHS and the UK Home Office agreed to establish a dedicated working group to identify gaps and challenges in the U.S.-UK information sharing relationship, including with regard to criminal records of individuals who have engaged with our respective national security systems but do not meet current thresholds for watchlisting and sharing. The working group will develop an implementation plan that addresses these gaps and enhances current information sharing mechanisms to meet new requirements for continued VWP participation.

Question#:	8
Topic:	ICE Request
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: This January, the day after Holocaust Remembrance Day, Geraldo Pando was arrested for vandalizing Union Station, in Washington DC, with multiple swastika symbols. Reports allege that this man had been deported twice, had a lengthy criminal history, and had also vandalized Capitol Police (USCP) Headquarters a week prior to the incident at Union Station. However, this man was released from USCP custody because Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) refused to request for him to be detained for his transfer to federal custody because he did not meet DHS priorities for enforcement issued by Secretary Mayorkas last year. This is extremely concerning because one of the priority guidance criteria for enforcement is being a threat to public safety. Because of the Administration's failure to detain and deport this criminal, he was released and committed a hate crime against the Jewish community. Why did ICE not request for Geraldo Pando to be detained until he could be transferred to federal custody?

Response: In October 2019, Washington D.C. passed emergency legislation that barred police and other city agencies from sharing information with or giving special access to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This legislation was made permanent in May 2021 as the "Sanctuary Values Act." See D.C. Law 23-284, 67 DCR 13034 (May 15, 2021). As such, DC authorities have prevented ICE from obtaining information on migrants who were arrested on local charges within the District and from determining the detention location of individuals detained by the District. Such efforts impede ICE's ability to lodge detainers. Because the District has barred cooperation and information sharing with ICE, the District will not release individuals for whom ICE has lodged a detainer unless an ICE officer is physically present upon release. Additionally, the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia issued a permanent injunction barring the U.S. Marshals Service from holding migrants for ICE pursuant to a civil detainer at Superior Court for the District of Columbia. *N.S. v. Dixon*, No. 1:20-cv-101-RCL, 2021 WL 4622490 (D.D.C. Oct. 10, 2021). The case is currently on appeal. Consequently, ICE has limited ability to lodge detainers for arrests within the District.

State and local law enforcement cooperation is paramount to ICE to fulfill its important national security, public safety, and border security mission. Some jurisdictions elect to minimally cooperate, or share information, with ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) law enforcement efforts, while other jurisdictions have ceased to cooperate with ICE altogether.

ICE has designated Mr. Geraldo Pando as a public safety priority and will pursue criminal prosecution for illegal reentry pursuant to 8 U.S.C. 1326(c).

Question#:	8
Topic:	ICE Request
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: When will the Department start enforcing its own priority guidance to remove criminals with no lawful status from this country before they harm more Americans?

Response: The U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas issued a Final Judgment vacating Secretary Mayorkas's September 30, 2021 memorandum, *Guidelines for the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Law* (*Guidelines for the Enforcement of Civil Immigration Law* (Guidelines)), and remanding the matter to DHS for further consideration. *Texas v. United States*, --- F. Supp. 3d ---, 2022 WL 2109204 No. 6:21-00016 (S.D. Tex. June 10, 2022). Because of the court's order, DHS stopped applying the Guidelines. DHS has asked the Supreme Court to stay the District Court's decision, which would enable the Department to continue to rely on the *Guidelines*. The case is currently before the Supreme Court with arguments set for December 2022. DHS will continue to abide by the court's order as long as it remains in effect.

Question#:	9
Topic:	Detecting Threats
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: There are a lot of stakeholders involved in foreign travel to the United States. CBP handles the Visa Waiver Program and ESTA applications, the State Department handles visas for those who aren't eligible under the Visa Waiver Program, and the FBI is in charge of maintaining the terrorist watchlist.

What is your respective role in this intelligence-sharing environment, as it pertains to detecting threats posed by foreign travel to the United States?

Response: DHS I&A collects, analyzes, and shares intelligence on threats posed by terrorists to US and foreign-partner travel and immigration systems. As part of that mission, I&A analyzes all-source intelligence to assess terrorist group intentions and activities with regard to travel to the US, attempts to exploit or circumvent traveler screening systems, produce or acquire fraudulent travel documents, and other methods of traveling illicitly. I&A shares its analysis with policymakers, DHS's operational components, and intelligence and law enforcement partners to inform screening and vetting procedures, border security and counterterrorism policy, and provide warning on terrorist travel threats to the Homeland.

In addition, specifically concerning Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) applications, I&A acts as a technical service provider to the NVC, which facilitates vetting support for ESTA applications. The NVC streamlines the sharing of sensitive information between vetting agencies and national security partners, including elements of the IC and law enforcement agencies. Historically, these partners provided varying levels of information under different timelines and using different modalities for delivery, creating potential gaps in CBP's understanding of the threats posed by ESTA applicants. I&A's technical services and classified web-based application addressed this problem by offering a consolidated vetting infrastructure, with more information from partners now provided in the same manner and on the same timeline. Final adjudication authority still remains with CBP for ESTA applications; the NVC's role is limited to providing the process and technology that enables timely and more informed vetting decisions, and I&A's role is limited to providing technical support to that process and technology.

The Department of State has already begun to transition vetting of non-immigrant visa applicants through the NVC and expects to complete the transition by October 31, 2022.

Additionally, I&A serves as the Executive Agent for DHS's Terrorist Watchlisting Program and supports nominations of Transnational Organized Crime (TOC) actors through the TOC Actor Detection Program. I&A facilitates the nomination of terrorism data to the NCTC and unifies

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and guides the DHS Enterprise. I&A management of the DHS Terrorist Watchlisting Program ensures that terrorism data held by the Department is shared internally and externally in a timely and effective manner. Rapid sharing of threat actor information supports screening and vetting operations. I&A Watchlisting activities have also supported the analysis of Afghan evacuees (Operation Allies Welcome), and continues to implement initiatives intent on closing intelligence and information gaps.

Question: How would you grade the current information-sharing arrangement for preventing terrorists from entering the country?

Response: There is a high level of information sharing between intelligence and law enforcement partners that is used to screen and vet potential travelers to the United States. Information sharing is an integral part of the VWP and includes some of the most robust sharing of threat information of any of the United States' bilateral foreign partnerships. All VWP member countries must have reciprocal sharing agreements with the United States that include terrorism watchlisting information and criminal histories. DHS is currently working with our VWP partners to automate much of the information sharing, so that real-time information can be relayed between the United States and VWP member countries.

Question: How can we improve information and intelligence sharing within this broad ecosystem of stakeholders?

Response: Continuing to improve our screening and vetting partners' ability to access classified information in a timely and useable fashion, and ensuring the wide dissemination of derogatory information, would help ensure that the appropriate information is available and usable by DHS, the U.S. Department of State, and other agencies with a traveler screening mission. Continuing to ensure the efficacy and efficiency of the technical backbones and systems that provide the vehicle for executing these missions is also vital.

Expanding the amount and types of information shared between DHS and national security partners not only will improve our ability to access classified derogatory information, but it will make additional types of information available that can be used to identify potential trends and previously unknown threats. DHS's efforts in this space rely on a multi-faceted screening and vetting apparatus that seeks to ingest information not only from classified, more traditional bi lateral engagements, but also through leveraging DHS relationships and information sharing partnerships to ensure that all relevant and shareable biometric, biographic, and identities-based information on potential threat actors from a variety of vectors, not limited to terrorism but also within the human smuggling and criminal spheres, are available to DHS personnel for operational missions. As these agreements expand, they must also clearly define the types of

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information to be shared, the frequency of sharing, and how the information is accessed. Direct data feeds that include shared information, as opposed to transactional sharing, or sharing via individual database access, help integrate different data sources into formats that can be easily accessed by a variety of partners. Further, improving the speed at which intelligence is shared with DHS customers will enable relevant and timely information to support travel and immigration decisions. However, this requires intelligence agencies to invest in data management efforts that update the format and structure of their data in order to deliver disseminated information via automated, machine-readable processes at the speed of mission.

Question#:	10
Topic:	Gather Intelligence
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: It's important for Congress, especially this Committee, to recognize that we cannot hyper-focus on certain threat actors and neglect others. Terrorists are motivated by a vast array of violent ideologies and personal grievances, and those motivations are becoming increasingly blended together in what experts describe as a "salad bar" of ideologies.

How is your office working to gather intelligence on international terrorists and domestic terrorists?

Response: I&A works closely with its intelligence community and law enforcement partners to gather information and produce analysis. I&A frequently produces joint intelligence products that focus on a variety of terrorist threats across the ideological spectrum.

I&A also publishes collection requirements to leverage IC collection against threats to the Homeland. I&A's collectors work closely with federal, state, and local partners to gather and report terrorism information via I&A's overt human intelligence collection program, which are conducted in accordance with applicable law and policy, including protections for privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties and I&A's Attorney General-approved-Intelligence Oversight guidelines. Resulting information is shared with DHS and the IC via serialized intelligence reports and all terrorism-related information is also coordinated with the FBI.

Additionally, I&A publishes educational materials that not only guide our own efforts but are also shared with our State and Local partners to inform them of DHS priorities and needs. All requirements and educational resources are reviewed and cleared through DHS's Privacy Office, Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and Office of the General Counsel, and I&A's Privacy and Oversight Branch.

Question: Is your office properly resourced to focus on both?

Response: As part of President's Budget request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2023, I&A has requested funding for additional positions to address shortfalls in our capacity for analytic coverage of terrorism threats. Without adequate analytic coverage, we could suffer from blind spots in our terrorism analysis and production, which increases the risk of not identifying terrorist threats to the Homeland and/or not providing strategic warning to our Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial and private sector partners. I&A in FY 2021 and FY 2022 reallocated existing terrorism analytic resources to augment our domestic terrorism portfolio, which forced a corresponding reduction in coverage of other important Homeland terrorism issues that would be addressed by these additional positions. I&A plans to allocate the requested additional positions

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to reinforce topic coverage including: homegrown violent extremism and radicalization in the Homeland; warning on terrorist tactics, techniques and procedures for SLTT and Federal partners; and terrorist attempts to exploit US immigration, border, and travel systems. Finally, I&A is seeking resources and authorization to deliver the Intelligence Data Exchange for Analytics, which will afford I&A and other DHS Intelligence Enterprise members an unclassified platform to apply advanced analytics to discover information of intelligence value, including on terrorist threats to the Homeland, and further reduce risk and analytic gaps in this space. Similarly, additional collection managers are being added to ensure a comprehensive approach which drives the gathering and disseminating of intelligence.

Question#:	11
Topic:	Ideological Motivation
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: In analyzing attacks against houses of worship and other soft targets that were discussed at the hearing, does the threat actor's ideological motivation make a difference in how DHS approaches it, or in the harm caused by the attack?

Response: I&A is postured to produce analysis on threats across the full spectrum of threat actors, including foreign and domestic terrorists motivated by a variety of ideologies. Our analysis has shown that, irrespective of ideology, individuals seeking to target houses of worship or other soft targets typically act alone or in small cells using a range of relatively simple but deadly tactics that require consistent measures to secure the targets and mitigate the threats. We do conduct analysis of how ideological motivations may drive potential future attacks to provide our stakeholders with insight into the strategic threat environment, opportunities to prioritize and adjust resources, as appropriate, and to guide the development of additional mitigation or response efforts.

Question: Is one inherently more or less dangerous than the other?

Response: The primary threat to the Homeland stems from lone offenders or small cells who can launch attacks with little to no warning. Over the last ten years, lone offenders motivated by a wide range of ideologies—both international and domestic terrorism-related—have launched devastating attacks in the Homeland. Attacks or attempted attacks against houses of worship have been committed by domestic violent extremists with a variety of motivations including racial or ethnic grievances, anti-government or anti-authority grievances, and other personalized grievances, as well as by individuals inspired to act by foreign terrorist organizations, also known as homegrown violent extremists.

The IC has assessed that racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs) who advocate for the superiority of the white race, , and militia violent extremists (MVEs), present the most lethal Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE) movement in the homeland. Per a March 2021 DVE assessment by DHS, the FBI, and NCTC, RMVEs are most likely to conduct mass-casualty attacks against civilians, while MVEs typically target law enforcement, elected officials, and government personnel and facilities.

Through our analytic products, we highlight drivers of violence that could affect targeted communities and provide insights to these communities to help understand the threat environment from all attackers.

Question#:	12
Topic:	Akram Information
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Josh Hawley
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: What information did the United Kingdom government share with the United States regarding Malik Faisal Akram’s immigration to the United States under the Visa Waiver Program, shortly before he attacked a synagogue in Colleyville, TX?

What information did DHS have on Akram when it determined to admit him into the country?

Was DHS aware of Akram’s criminal history when it admitted him into the country?

Response: Under current agreements, the UK, does not routinely share all criminal history information with DHS. DHS works to proactively obtain criminal history data to support vetting and screening processes. Historically, it has been difficult to establish criminal history information agreements since the United States restricts what it shares in a reciprocal manner. Under current U.S. law, DHS is not able to disclose criminal history data managed by the FBI – which includes state and local law enforcement records – to its foreign partners for routine border screening and immigration vetting purposes. DHS and U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) exchange criminal history with their foreign partners on a case-by-case basis when there is articulable suspicion of a crime or for a criminal justice purpose. DHS continues to explore ways to increase our ability to receive and share criminal information with our foreign partners.

DHS reiterates that there was no derogatory information available to the United States during the evaluation of Akram’s ESTA application or at the time of his admittance. The VWP employs a multilayered approach to screening and vetting. CBP conducts comprehensive vetting of VWP applicants in advance of travel to the United States via air or sea using the information each applicant submits through the ESTA application. Biographic application data is subject to unclassified and classified vetting, including checks against available law enforcement and intelligence community data. Results from these checks inform CBP’s determination on whether the applicant is eligible to travel to the United States under the VWP. Additionally, CBP reviews the application information to determine if there are any additional grounds for ineligibility. There was no derogatory information on Mr. Malik Faisal Akram in U.S. holdings prior to January 15, 2022.

Question#:	13
Topic:	Information Sharing with the U.K.
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Josh Hawley
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: What is the nature and terms of the United States’ information-sharing agreement with the United Kingdom for individuals who seek to enter our country under the Visa Waiver Program?

Response: The UK shares terrorism and law enforcement information in accordance with US-UK bilateral information sharing agreements. The U.S. Government has several information sharing agreements with the UK, which allow for exchange of criminal, terrorism, and immigration information. CBP and the UK Border Agency signed an Memorandum of Understanding Regarding the Exchange of Critical Passenger Information (i.e. Passenger Name Record or “PNR” data), enabling the exchange of critical passenger information on fraud, admissibility, smuggling, and national security-related information. Additionally, the U.S. and UK have a binding agreement that enables the systematic sharing of data to support the administration and enforcement of our immigration laws, including to facilitate adjudication of benefit application and admissibility decisions, and to further the prevention, investigation, or punishment of acts that would constitute a crime rendering an individual inadmissible or removable. The FBI has an agreement with the UK for the sharing of terrorism information, of which DHS is a beneficiary.

Question#:	14
Topic:	In-Person Interview
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Josh Hawley
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: Did Akram received an in-person interview when he was admitted into the United States, and if so, what did that interview consist of?

Response: All persons arriving into the United States are subject to inspection and search by CBP officers at the port of entry on arrival. Individuals are interviewed to determine their identity, citizenship, residence, intent, and admissibility in the United States.

Question#:	15
Topic:	Policy Failure
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Josh Hawley
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: What failure in existing policy allowed Akram to enter the country?

Response: DHS notes that the UK criminal history and security concerns were not available to DHS at the time of his application and travel. DHS continuously evaluates its vetting processes and works to provide improvements to address new and emerging threats. In light of this incident, we are closely reviewing our processes to identify any recommended changes and to address those urgently with our international partners, and in consultation with our interagency partners.

Under current information sharing agreements and procedures, DHS would need to request information on the individual's criminal history based on grounds to suspect an individual of wrongdoing or suspicious activity. In short, DHS would have needed an initial flag to request additional information. As part of the process that applies routinely to every individual who travels to the United States under the VWP, the individual was vetted through numerous law enforcement and intelligence databases at various stages. In this case, CBP had no grounds to suspect this individual of any wrongdoing or that he presented a security threat to the United States and therefore had no grounds to request information from the UK.

DHS does not have a mechanism in place with all VWP countries to request criminal history information in an automated fashion for routine border and immigration vetting purposes. DHS aims to help close this gap under a newly introduced information sharing requirement, the Enhanced Border Security Partnership (EBSP) requirement. Under a EBSP, DHS will conduct a biometric check against a VWP member country's biometric data to authenticate a VWP traveler's identity, and quickly and timely receive immigration and criminal history information relevant to border, immigration, and related law enforcement encounters. EBSPs will serve as an additional layer of security to enable DHS to confirm that each VWP traveler meets admissibility requirements or is eligible for benefits or protections in the United States. This capability will be available to multiple DHS agencies, including U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and ICE, and interagency partners in assessing benefit and protection applications and in conducting investigations or enforcement activities.

Additionally, for a variety of reasons, including privacy, the United States and most VWP countries are legally prohibited from sharing criminal history information on their own citizens with a foreign entity. This is particularly true when discussing arrests versus convictions. DHS welcomes a conversation with Members of Congress on ways to close this gap, to include enhanced authorities necessary to allow DHS to share criminal history record information maintained by the FBI with its VWP partners for immigration and border screening purposes.

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This would go a long way toward convincing VWP partners to provide similar criminal history information on their nationals to DHS for similar purposes.

Question#:	16
Topic:	Visa Waiver Program Vetting
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Josh Hawley
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: What steps has DHS taken to reform its vetting of individuals who seek entry into the country under the Visa Waiver Program?

Response: Security checks are as good as the information available in DHS and other U.S. Government Agency systems. Therefore, DHS is looking at what information it does not receive in an automated fashion and how it can obtain more information through automated methods to enhance vetting. VWP countries must meet and maintain high standards in security and law enforcement practices, as required by statutory provisions and programmatic guidelines aligning with best practices in global security. DHS routinely assesses programmatic requirements for ways to strengthen the security partnerships between the United States and VWP member countries. As part of these routine and ongoing assessments, the DHS Secretary determined modern technologies can help us share information more effectively and comprehensively in a manner that supports today's travel volumes and more closely aligns to information sharing requirements under with 8 U.S.C. § 1187(c)(2)(f).

To that end, DHS recently introduced a requirement that each existing and aspirant VWP partner establish an EBSP with DHS to improve compliance with longstanding statutory information sharing requirements for VWP participation. Under the EBSP, DHS will conduct a biometric check against VWP member country biometric data to authenticate a VWP travelers' identity, and quickly receive immigration and criminal history information relevant to border, immigration, and related law enforcement encounters. This will be an additional layer for DHS to confirm each VWP traveler meets admissibility requirements or is eligible for benefits or protections in the United States. Accordingly, DHS seeks to access such information in an automated manner through biometric information sharing partnerships. This capability is designed to be available to multiple DHS Components, including U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and ICE, and interagency partners in assessing benefit and protection applications and in conducting investigations or enforcement activities.

Responses to Post-Hearing Questions for the Record from Christopher Logan & Marcus Coleman

Question#:	1
Topic:	Anti-Semitic Violence
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: It's important for Congress, especially this Committee, to recognize that we cannot hyper-focus on certain threat actors and neglect others. Terrorists are motivated by a vast array of violent ideologies and personal grievances, and those motivations are becoming increasingly blended together in what experts describe as a "salad bar" of ideologies.

The Jewish community faces threats from across the ideological spectrum. White supremacists, far-left extremists, and jihadi terrorists have all sought to harm Jews. How can we keep our Jewish Americans safe and prevent these threats of antisemitic violence in the future?

Response: The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recognizes the many challenges faced by faith-based and diverse communities, particularly with the rise of domestic violent extremism in our country, which is the most significant and persistent terrorism-related threat to the homeland today. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) hate crimes data from 2019 and 2020 reflects that a staggering 62 and 55 percent respectively of religious based hate crimes were motivated by anti-Jewish bias. This is especially alarming given the small size of the Jewish population in the U.S. of approximately 2.4 percent. The safety and security of everyone, including Jewish Americans, who face threats from a wide array of violent individuals are paramount. How we keep everyone safe continues to require the combined efforts of the whole community rather than the exclusive effort of any single organization or level of government.

Nationally, the funding provided through the portfolio of Preparedness Grant Programs, including the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), enables houses of worship and our other homeland security partners to develop and sustain critical capabilities. These grants allow our partners to prevent, protect against, respond to, recover from, and mitigate threats or acts of terrorism and other high-consequence events.

Specific to the NSGP, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has led or participated in over 60 formal outreach sessions (webinars, video teleconferences, and virtual technical assistance) since October 2021. These outreach sessions have specifically focused on the nonprofit community in preparation for the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 funding cycle. Participants included houses of worship and organizations that represent and/or support underserved communities and vulnerable populations. This outreach will continue and be further expanded moving forward to account for growing interest in the NSGP and additional increases in the amount of funding available to the program. NSGP funding increased from \$180 million in FY 2021 to \$250 million in FY 2022. Further, the president's FY 2023 budget proposal includes \$360 million for NSGP.

Question#:	1
Topic:	Anti-Semitic Violence
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

The best way to keep Jewish Americans safe and prevent threats of terrorism and targeted violence is to understand the threat; rapidly share threat information; implement protective measures; and respond quickly when incidents occur. DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) has produced and shared a number of intelligence products on threats to faith-based groups, facilities, and houses of worship with our stakeholders. I&A has forged relationships with private sector organizations, including faith-based organizations such as the Secure Community Network, a nonprofit safety and security organization for the Jewish community in North America, to gather information related to these threats to better understand changes in the threat environment. I&A is also piloting efforts to work more closely to share near-real time threat information with faith-based groups, including Jewish groups, and is already receiving tips and leads based on the capabilities of these participating organizations. I&A has several analytic programs in which faith-based organizations can participate, including the Corporate Security Symposium Series and the Public-Private Analytic Exchange Program. In addition, I&A has developed an unclassified online training on suspicious activity reporting processes and procedures designed for private sector partners, to include faith-based communities. The results of these efforts will inform a more robust exchange of relevant and actionable information with these and other similar organizations.

Additionally, I&A's field-based officers have working relationships with regional faith-based groups to gather and report threat information into intelligence channels for analysis, while also facilitating information sharing with these partners. I&A also works closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement agencies to apprise them of changes in threat environment regarding faith-based organizations and facilities to ensure law enforcement is able to respond quickly to emerging incidents and events in an effort to mitigate threats.

In addition to the efforts described above, I&A routinely conducts threat analysis and outreach, and issues intelligence products on the full spectrum of terrorism threat actors. This includes regular engagement with stakeholders from faith-based organizations, including those from the Jewish community. For example, three days after the 15 January 2022 attack on the synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, I&A worked with FBI and NCTC to publish a Joint Intelligence Bulletin titled "Attack on Synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, Illustrates Enduring Threat to Jewish Religious Community and Institutions," which was made available to DHS's partners via its Homeland Security Information Network. I&A, working with the FBI and the National Counterterrorism Center, also published an unclassified product—available to the public—titled "Threat of Terrorism and Hate Crimes Against Jewish Communities in the US" in 2020.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) also works closely with the faith-based community generally, and the Jewish Community specifically, to support efforts to build security capacity in a manner that allows houses of worship to sustain an open and welcoming

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environment for peaceful congregation. Through Protective Security Advisors (PSAs) – more than 140 security subject matter experts located across the country – CISA assists communities in better understanding potential threats, identifying potential vulnerabilities, and strategizing security enhancements. PSAs proactively engage stakeholders to provide access to vulnerability assessments, training, exercises, tools, and resources available across DHS.

Through a dedicated web presence geared towards houses of worship, CISA also offers a comprehensive suite of resources that inform cost-effective risk mitigation solutions. Among these resources, the “Mitigating Attacks on Houses of Worship Security Guide” is a foundational document that informs security enhancements through a review of incidents in a 10-year span and provides tangible corresponding protective measures through a layered security approach. In addition, the “Houses of Worship Security Self-Assessment Interactive Tool” allows individuals with little to no security experience to determine potential vulnerabilities; in most cases, states also allow the results of the self-assessment to be submitted as part of the Nonprofit Homeland Security Grant application process. There are also resources to support active shooter preparedness, bombing prevention, and other attack types.

To augment traditional security measures, CISA also has several resources available to support outreach and engagement efforts of its stakeholders. The Power of Hello assists communities in better identifying and effectively responding to suspicious behavior by suggesting questions to consider when navigating the threat; resources also include information on when and how to obtain help. The De-Escalation Series assist stakeholders in recognizing the warning signs of someone on a path to violence; assessing if the situation or person of concern is escalating; de-escalating the situation through purposeful actions; and reporting the situation through established protocols including 9-1-1 for immediate threats. These resources are translated into more than 10 languages.

Finally, CISA offers a range of exercise services – from end-to-end exercise planning and conduct to “off the shelf” downloadable and customizable CISA Tabletop Exercise Packages (CTEPs). CTEPs provide exercise templates to assist organizations with planning and facilitating their own exercises, including products specifically for faith-based organizations.

Question#:	2
Topic:	Pray Safe Act
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: Ranking Member Portman's bipartisan bill, the Pray Safe Act, was introduced last year and would direct DHS to establish a clearinghouse of resources for houses of worship and faith-based organizations, so that they can better access security best practices, information on grant programs like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), and training opportunities. How important is it that our religious communities have access to this information, especially on safety and security best practices, from the federal government?

Response: The Pray Safe Act will benefit religious communities by directing the establishment of a clearinghouse of resources and best practices information for nonprofits, houses of worship, and faith-based organizations. The clearinghouse would provide access to information on a wide variety of subjects that could help applicants access and apply for grant programs like the NSGP. A robust clearinghouse would also be valuable to all nonprofit organizations, including religious or faith-based organizations and houses of worship. The concept of a “one stop shop” of tools, resources, guides, best practices, and potential federal funding opportunities located within a single website could afford a highly efficient and effective way of providing timely information to religious-based organizations and communities, as well as federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments nationwide.

A streamlined, effective, and easy-to-use repository developed in partnership with the faith-based community could increase community leaders' awareness of best practices, grants information, training, and other resources available to inform cost-effective security- and safety-based decision-making. This capability may also increase coordination within the Federal Government and encourage the communication of information in a manner that considers the unique operating model of houses of worship, which requires an open and welcoming environment for peaceful congregation. As demonstrated by the Federal Government's school safety clearinghouse, www.schoolsafety.gov, a clearinghouse can be an effective way to support stakeholder efforts to build security capacity in a scalable manner.

Question#:	3
Topic:	NSGP Fund Distribution
Hearing:	Violent Extremism and Terrorism: Examining the Threat to Houses of Worship and Public Spaces
Primary:	The Honorable Rob Portman
Committee:	HOMELAND SECURITY (SENATE)

Question: During the hearing, you discussed the need to equitably distribute NSGP funds across all communities. Can you provide a detailed breakdown of your respective offices' plans for outreach, and other steps taken to ensure all religious communities receive their share of these funds?

Response: Since October 2021, DHS has led or participated in over 60 formal virtual outreach sessions (e.g., webinars, video teleconferences, and virtual technical assistance) focused on the nonprofit community in preparation for the FY 2022 funding cycle. Participants include houses of worship and organizations that represent and/or support underserved communities and vulnerable populations. These outreach efforts have been executed in coordination with the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, the DHS Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, and the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations Service.

Additionally, FEMA staff participated as guest speakers in events at the request of national stakeholder organizations including:

- The Jewish Federation of North America
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- The Council on American Islamic Relations

As of March 2022, these events reached over 4,000 participants representing an estimated 3,000 organizations.

FEMA is in the process of scheduling an additional eight webinars from April to June to help nonprofit organizations prepare their applications for the FY 2022 NSGP.

Materials and invitations to NSGP for these webinars will be distributed to the entirety of via the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, (interfaith) email list, reaching an estimated 63,000 recipients.

Finally, FEMA created an NSGP-specific email inbox to address stakeholder questions and disseminate information. Since its establishment last year, over 5,000 emails have been exchanged, including Q&A, sharing reference and information materials from FEMA and other federal partners, and signing up individuals/organizations to the NSGP information sharing distribution list.