



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

*Opening Statement*

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Candice Miller (R-Mich.)  
Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

**“The Outer Ring of Border Security: DHS’s International Security Programs”**

**Remarks as Prepared**

We learned on 9/11 and again with the Christmas Day Bomber that we cannot wait to act until terror plots reach our shores. Pushing our borders out gives the nation’s security professionals the time and space to interdict plots before they reach the homeland.

For more than 10 years, DHS, and in particular its operational components have done just that. Today we have several programs in place to stop suspected terrorists, foreign fighters, and others with significant derogatory information provided by the intelligence community from ever coming to America.

No system is perfect, of course, but the earlier in the travel and visa process we begin to conduct security checks, have a CBP officer examine and pre-clear an individual, or do a security advisory opinion to make sure we are examining visas appropriately, the safer the homeland will be.

The vetting these programs do has created an ‘outer ring of border security,’ which has become even more important due to the significant and growing threat that fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) pose to our nation.

These fighters could be just one flight away -- bringing with them the skills, training, ideology, and commitment to killing Americans they learned overseas. This is why it is so important that DHS officers and attachés abroad conduct security operations.

Today, DHS has a large footprint overseas with more than 1800 people stationed in 77 foreign countries across the globe.

I understand that the posting of DHS personnel overseas is both a cumbersome process with significant cost – in many cases costing more than five hundred thousand dollars per person each year.

Space is limited at many consulates and embassies overseas, so it is incumbent on the Department of Homeland Security to use, and constantly update, its risk-based approach so that the American people are getting good security value for the expense.

Threats that originate overseas have evolved over time, and our security posture should evolve with it. DHS should constantly reevaluate the location of their officers to ensure that we have our men and women in the right countries. Additionally, if we can do some of the screening and vetting work here at home, we should. And when the security of the homeland requires the department to have officers overseas, we need to maximize their use to cover multiple countries within their respective issue areas, as well ensure their personal safety.

To that end, I am glad to see that, in many cases, DHS utilizes a regional model, where its attachés are covering several nearby countries to make sure the department's investigations are being properly supported overseas.

I am also pleased that where we have Visa Security Program officers overseas we have the PATRIOT program that examines the totality of data on ESTA and visa applications. However, this program is limited to just those posts where Visa Security Units are in place. Despite the Visa Security Program's proven security value, and robust congressional support, this program has not been expanded to all high-risk posts overseas.

And no issue has kept CBP leadership busier over the past few years than preclearance operations.

Failure to properly consult with stakeholders and the Congress, and other "process fouls" on preclearance expansion caused a great deal of consternation on Capitol Hill and in this committee.

I hope that the department has learned from some of the early missteps and will keep Congress fully abreast of future plans, especially in light of the recent announcement of the intension to expand preclearance to ten additional locations.

I want to be clear that I support preclearance where it makes sense. Preclearance has been used as a security screening and trade facilitation tool since the early 1950's, and since 9/11, the security value of these operations has only been heightened.

However, as made clear by legislation the House passed last year, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the Abu Dhabi agreement. Expansion of preclearance has to be done in such a way that supports both our security and facilitation objectives and does not disadvantage our domestic airlines at the same time. The full committee plans on taking up preclearance legislation once again later this month, and I look forward to its quick passage by the House and Senate.

Defeating terrorists' ability to move internationally has long been a focus area for this subcommittee. We have, and will continue to be champions for pushing the border out because our national security demands it.

So we will look forward to hearing from Mr. Wagner on CBP's plans to expand preclearance operations overseas.

I am also interested in hearing more about the work of DHS led vetted units that work throughout the world, including Central America, to help build capacity of law enforcement, and help lead to better conditions to reduce migration to the United States.

Our enemies are intent on attacking our country and are actively seeking to avoid our countermeasures. We must be one step ahead, instead of constantly reacting to their latest attack. DHS's presence overseas is a crucial part of the 'outer ring of border security' and provides many opportunities to break up plots early in the travel and visa cycle.

The purpose of this hearing is to make sure DHS and the government as a whole are taking full advantage of every tool in our tool kit to limit terrorist mobility as far from our shores as possible, and ensure that limited taxpayer funds are used as effectively as possible. I thank the witnesses for being here today and look forward to your testimony.

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