



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) House Homeland Security Committee

*DHS in Today's Dangerous World:
Examining The Department's Budget and Readiness to Counter Homeland Threats*

March 16, 2016

Remarks as Prepared

Almost fifteen years after 9/11, the war against Islamist terror has entered a dark phase. New battlefields have emerged across the world, and our enemies are on the offensive. They are recruiting through retweets and crowd-sourcing their attacks. And they have brought the conflict to our doorsteps in new and dangerous ways.

Only months ago in San Bernardino, we witnessed the horrible violence terrorists can inflict on our communities. Yet we were reminded in the wake of that tragedy that such radicalism is no match for our resolve. The American people will not submit to the intimidation of jihadists, and we will not allow their repressive worldview to infect our free society.

Secretary Johnson, your team faces no small task. We are in the most serious threat environment since 9/11, and the Department of Homeland Security is on the frontlines. You are responsible for keeping threats away from our shores at a time when terrorists are targeting us aggressively. Just two weeks ago, this Committee released a report showing that since 2014 ISIS has been tied to 75 terrorist plots against the West. One third of those plots were aimed at the United States, making our nation the group's number-one target.

But I am alarmed that despite these threats, the President still lacks a coherent vision for winning the wider war against Islamist terror. The Administration's wait-and-see, and lead from behind, foreign policy not only allowed ISIS to create a terror incubator in Syria and Iraq, but it also allowed a terrorist wildfire to sweep the globe. Even still, the President has failed to develop credible plans for containing—let alone rolling back—new extremist safe havens.

If we do not win this war on offense, then our security falls to our defense. And much of that rests on your shoulders, Mr. Secretary. We've arrested more than 80 ISIS supporters in the United States, and homegrown terror cases are being investigated in every state. The danger is real.

That is why I am grateful DHS is ramping up efforts to combat domestic radicalization. Your Department takes the issue seriously and has shown much-needed leadership. Overall though, I am disappointed the Administration is not doing more. Once again, the President is asking Congress to give him billions more for countering climate change than for countering violent extremism.

Terror threats, however, are not the only homeland security challenge we face. Our borders are not secure, and they have become highways of illicit traffic and violence. The American people are demanding that Washington do its job and secure our territory. But time and again, they have been let down.

The lack of a clear vision for securing the border is one of this Administration's greatest failings. Incredibly, in this year's budget the White House proposes cutting the number of Border Patrol agents. This sends a signal to the American people that their government is not serious about fixing this crisis.

I hope today we will also spend time examining our cyber defenses. The effects of cyber intrusions are felt every day across America, from corporate boardrooms to kitchen tables. DHS has stepped up its efforts to secure federal networks and to assist the private sector, but our country is still under daily assault. And the bad guys are winning. Network security is a central element of our national security, and today I hope we can discuss the Department's cybersecurity agenda and where we need to focus our efforts the most.

Finally, I am concerned about the steep cuts—more than \$500 million—in this year's DHS budget for the Urban Area Security Initiative and State Homeland Security Grant Programs that help first responders. Once again, the terror threat level is higher than it has ever been during my time in Congress. State and local responders are the country's first line of defense, and we need them to be vigilant, trained, and equipped to stop acts of terror. Why on earth, then, would we slash their grant funding? Today we are hoping for a good explanation, because I can tell you that right now our first responders don't need us to cut their budgets. They need us to have their backs.

I thank you for joining us today, Mr. Secretary. We hope to cover a wide range of issues and to hear about your plans for setting DHS up for success in confronting these challenges.

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