



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

*Shutting Down Terrorist Pathways into America
September 14, 2016*

Remarks as Prepared

This past weekend we marked the fifteenth anniversary of one of the darkest days in our nation's history. On September 11th, 2001, our people, our homeland, and our way of life came under attack.

I remember watching the television with my five-year-old daughter as the second tower was hit.

And like many of you, I realized this was not an accident. It was an act of war against our country.

The world has changed since then, and today my daughter is now 20 years old. But we cannot let the passage of time dull our memories or temper our resolve.

Those who don't learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

That's why in the aftermath of 9/11, we made a solemn pledge: never again.

The agencies represented here today were brought together under one roof for exactly that purpose.

You've made counterterrorism your highest priority. You've connected the dots and prevented terrorist attacks. And you've made it harder for them to infiltrate the United States undetected.

But our enemies have come a long way, too. They see our weaknesses and are always trying to exploit them.

Unlike the 9/11 hijackers, though, today's jihadists are using encrypted apps to hide their communications and recruiting operatives with the ease of a Tweet.

What's worse, groups like ISIS are in the middle of an unprecedented global killing spree. And they are sending waves of foreign fighters back home, battle-hardened and ready to spread terror.

Already, thousands of these fighters have come back, including many with Western passports that can allow them to enter the United States.

So the burden falls on you—our frontline defenders—to identify these fanatics and shut down any pathway they can use to slip into our country.

Let me be clear: this is one of our most urgent national security challenges.

That is why next week I will release a new, national counterterrorism strategy that highlights the issue and, more broadly, explains how we can rollback Islamist terrorists worldwide.

We know that jihadists are looking at every route into America, from sneaking across the Southwest Border to flying in as tourists and refugees.

Today, we will examine how they are trying to get in—and what your agencies are doing to fight back.

One year ago, this Committee released the most comprehensive report on terrorist travel since the 9/11 Commission.

Our bipartisan findings were very sobering, yet the Administration has failed to address many of them.

We still don't have a national strategy to combat terrorist travel. Our refugee program is not as secure as it needs to be. And we are struggling to bring our security checks into the social-media age.

Our allies are in worse shape, especially in Europe. I've seen it firsthand: their borders are not secure, they are not sharing intelligence quickly enough, and they are failing to screen travelers against terrorism databases.

We cannot afford to wait.

Today, I expect to hear what your agencies are doing to help fix this mess. If our allies can't step up to the plate, then terrorists will be one step closer to reaching us.

I also hope you will discuss any barriers here at home that might be making it harder for you to secure our country against this threat.

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This time last year, our Committee held the first-ever Congressional hearing at Ground Zero in New York.

We came together on hallowed ground to remember those we lost in New York, Washington, and Pennsylvania and those who have given their lives to keep America safe.

We still have an obligation to those victims and to their families.

And I believe the best way to honor their memory is to keep our pledge—by doing whatever we can to stop terror from reaching American shores.

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