



## HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

### Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Homeland Security Committee

“State of National Security Address”

February 5, 2018

Remarks as Prepared

#### Welcome

Thank you Frank. A special thanks to George Washington University for hosting me. And thank you to the students here in attendance. You are the thought leaders of tomorrow on these most pressing issues facing the United States.

#### The State of U.S. National Security

American strength is a pillar of global peace, upon which our allies and partners depend, and our enemies recoil.

As I reflect on my time as Chairman, I am disturbed by the evil that emerged over the last decade under retreating American leadership.

But I am encouraged by the progress we are making in eradicating this evil that has entrenched itself around the globe.

As an eternal optimist, I am confident our nation is finally headed in the right direction. Moving forward, it is critical that we continue to reclaim our sovereignty.

This includes enhancing security along the southern border of the United States, addressing vulnerabilities in our current immigration system, encouraging the responsible use of cyberspace, improving aviation security, and defending against the malicious ideology, intentions, and actions of our enemies.

#### Southern Border

For too long, our unsecured southern border with Mexico has been an open-door through which transnational criminal organizations like MS-13, dangerous opioids and poisonous narcotics, and trafficked women and children have poured into our country – destroying lives, shattering families, and ravaging our communities.

Despite the noble efforts of law enforcement entities, advocacy groups, and government agencies, human traffickers continue to exploit thousands of migrants making the arduous journey to the United States.

Security along the southern border is critical.

But as we know, there are other glaring vulnerabilities in our immigration system that must also be addressed.

### **Chain Migration and VISA Lottery**

Our nation's security has been weakened by chain migration and the Visa Lottery Program – two programs that risk exploitation from those who do not share our values and actively work to undermine them.

Look no further than the two recent terror attacks last year where these programs allowed terrorists to legally enter our country and wreak havoc on our way of life.

In 2010, the Visa Lottery Program facilitated the entry of a 27-year-old ISIS-influenced Uzbek immigrant into the United States.

On Halloween, he mowed down innocent Americans, Argentinians, and a Belgian in New York City.

Then in December, a Bangladeshi Salafist immigrant who entered the United States as a young adult through chain migration attempted to blow up a New York subway terminal in Times Square.

I was in New York that morning just a few blocks away during the attack to promote the Congressional Childhood Cancer Caucus.

I remember being notified about the attack, and was yet again reminded of how we must not – cannot – let hate triumph over hope.

### **Securing America's Future Act**

To address this assault on our security and finally secure our border, Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee Bob Goodlatte and I introduced the *Securing America's Future Act*.

This legislation authorizes the construction of a border wall system to stem the flow of illegal immigration.

It provides additional technology, infrastructure, and manpower to defend our border – 5,000 additional Border Patrol agents, and 5,000 Customs and Border Protection officers - including the authorization of the National Guard to provide air support to border security operations.

In addition, we demand the use of a mandatory Entry-Exit system at all ports of entry to address visa overstays.

We call for an end to chain migration and the Visa Lottery Program to defend against the future exploitation of our homeland.

And we propose a merit-based immigration system to attract the best and brightest.

Finally, the Securing America's Future Act allows DACA beneficiaries to receive a 3-year renewable legal status, while ensuring that gang members, individuals who have criminal convictions, or convictions in juvenile court for serious crimes are not eligible for legal status.

### **Jihadist Threats**

Make no mistake, our American way of life is under attack, and 1979 was the year that changed everything. In 1979, the revolution in Iran brought the Ayatollah to power.

That same year, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan and the Mujahedeen would rise to power, allowing Osama bin Laden to become a force to be reckoned with. It is now 39 years later and a serious threat landscape remains.

My committee has been laser focused on the threat of foreign fighters leaving the caliphate and identifying gaps in U.S. government information sharing and vetting procedures. I established two task forces to address these issues specifically, and enacted legislation to make America more secure.

The two recent terror attacks last year in New York underscore the threat we face from a determined enemy that does not sleep.

Our homeland, our allies, our partners, and friends are confronted with this stark reality, and will be for years to come.

Since 2013, there have been 150 homegrown jihadist terrorist cases in the United States and 179 ISIS-linked incidents in Europe.

These stats are alarming and are a demonstration of why we must remain vigilant in our quest to expel violent Islamic extremism from the earth by destroying the roots from which it came.

This threat manifests itself in the fertile, unstable ground upon which the jihadist ideology spreads – whether it is in the Middle East, North and sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines, or elsewhere.

We must deny these radicalized enemy combatants from achieving their jihadist glory.

### **Aviation Threats**

Of course, the memories of September 11<sup>th</sup> and the images of the planes striking the Twin Towers are never far from our thought.

While we are almost 17 years removed from that heart-wrenching morning – let me assure you – America’s aviation sector remains a crown jewel of ISIS and other terrorist groups targeting our homeland.

Late last year, the Director of the National Counterterrorism Center testified before my committee that they are seeing a surge in terrorist activity against commercial airlines.

Recently, we discovered that terrorists had the capability to create bombs from laptops. And we remember all AQAP’s printer bomb plot in 2010.

Unfortunately, TSA has struggled to deploy innovative security solutions that can be efficiently and effectively deployed at airports, such as Computed Tomography (CT). This technology is like moving from a two-dimensional X-Ray to a three- dimensional MRI, and provides a much clearer picture for screeners to detect threats.

However, we have seen the deployment of this technology bogged down by bureaucratic delays.

Each day we fail to effectively mitigate evolving threats to aviation security we risk letting terrorists get ahead in their efforts to harm the traveling public.

Additionally, we have seen insider threats to aviation security grow ever more concerning in the wake of the 2015 MetroJet bombing out of Sharmal Sheik airport in Egypt.

Despite DHS efforts to enhance security measures for flights to the United States at Last Point of Departure airports, they continue to be vulnerable.

In recognition of this glaring vulnerability, we enacted legislation to enhance TSA’s security procedures to address inconsistencies across the aviation system, particularly screening employees at secure access points.

We must continue to close security capability gaps at overseas airports, such as Istanbul and Cairo, with high volumes of American travelers. I have been to these airports. I have seen these vulnerabilities firsthand.

In addition, we must continue to enhance airport security at other high-risk airports in the Middle East and North Africa.

Doing so is critical to our national security as these threats are only one flight away from the Homeland.

But, as we all know, the threats against our homeland are not restricted by physical boundaries.

### **Cyber Threats**

Our adversaries, both nation-states and non-state actors, threaten us around the clock in cyberspace.

Whether it's North Korea launching a global cyberattack crippling infrastructure; China stealing our nation's valuable intellectual property; Russia conducting disinformation campaigns to sow discord among our people; Iran attacking our financial institutions; terrorists spreading evil propaganda; or criminals taking our financial and personal information – we are exposed to harm. All of us.

I was one of the millions of victims of the OPM data breach by China in 2014 and 2015, which resulted in over 20 million stolen records, including Social Security Numbers.

To mitigate this threat, we must improve our cyber resiliency and protection.

The House passed legislation I authored to elevate DHS's National Protection and Programs Directorate to a director-level position, and rename the directorate the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA. I hope the Senate passes this legislation soon.

Combatting malicious cyber activity also has a strong diplomatic component. For that reason, the House just voted on legislation introduced by Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce proposing the creation of the Office of Cyber Issues in the State Department.

This legislation establishes a high-level Ambassador for Cyberspace to lead the Department's diplomatic cyber efforts.

We must establish closer relationships with our allies and partners and enforce cyber commitments with other countries. And we must enforce our norms in cyberspace – not by our words, but by our actions.

We must also eliminate the legal barriers our private sector confronts from other countries' cybersecurity and national security laws, including the mandatory requirement to allow a foreign government to review a company's source code.

This puts us at a major disadvantage – both competitively and from a security perspective.

We must also build products that are secure. With the growth of the Internet of Things, we are more vulnerable now than ever.

Consider the recent announcement by Intel, one of the world's largest chipmakers, regarding its semiconductor vulnerabilities to Meltdown and Spectre, which pose serious risks to computer chips manufactured over the last two decades.

These threats are real and impact all of us.

I believe now more than ever that securing our nation at home requires projecting American strength abroad.

**North Korea**

Across the globe, nation-state adversaries have expanded their influence at the expense of our own.

In North Korea, Kim Jong Un has marched down a path of nuclearization absent American leadership.

He is now on the cusp of obtaining the ability to conduct a successful nuclear ICBM strike anywhere in the world – including the United States. This is unacceptable. That is why President Trump and his Administration have begun to lead a maximum pressure campaign against North Korea to compel him to retreat from his destabilizing nuclear ambitions.

These efforts include working with our international partners to diplomatically isolate the regime, increasing economic pressure on the North Korean economy through international sanctions, and refusing to take the use of military force off the table unless Kim Jong Un reverses course.

Further, Chinese and Russian attempts to undermine international sanctions regimes on North Korea at the expense of global security must not go unheeded.

The United States, and our partners in the international community, must confront them head on. We must be clear and decisive in our actions.

## **Iran**

As North Korea marches on with their destabilizing behavior, so does Iran – the world's leading state sponsor of terrorism.

Let me be clear, a nation that has repeatedly threatened America and Israel with absolute destruction, must not be allowed to ever have a nuclear weapon.

Unfortunately, as negotiated by the previous Administration, the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA, injected the Iranian regime with billions of dollars in fresh funding for their expansionist agenda.

From Yemen, through Iraq and Syria, all the way to Lebanon and the Mediterranean, Iran continues to solidify its influence in the region through a "Shia Crescent". This land bridge connects Iran to its destabilizing proxies throughout the region, such as Lebanese-based Hezbollah and Hamas in Palestine.

As our allies in the region understand, Iran's actions are a direct threat to regional stability.

Worse yet, the regime funds this expansion with domestic financial resources siphoned away from the Iranian people.

While inflation soars in Tehran, the regime brutally suppresses any dissidence to its irresponsible, negligent policies.

But there is light.

Again, we see Iranians pleading for freedom - protesting openly in the streets. We must support them. We must stand with them.

In January, I introduced legislation backing the Iranian people as they demand reforms in their country. This legislation requires the President to determine whether senior members of the Government of Iran are responsible for or complicit in human rights abuses, corruption, or censorship.

It also calls out the Iranian regime's practice of taking Americans and other foreign nationals hostage as a crime against humanity. Lastly, it outlines several steps the Administration should take in conjunction with our allies to stop this practice, including imposing sanctions on Iranian officials responsible for unjust detentions.

The Iranian people want, need, and deserve better.

## Russia

In Russia, Putin's regime continues to hinder American efforts at peace on the Korean Peninsula by covertly supporting the Kim regime's economy, which ultimately helps further their nuclear ambitions.

Across Europe and the Americas, Putin continues to engage in hostile disinformation campaigns intended to sow discord among our people, divide Europe, and drive a wedge between our NATO allies. And in Syria, he is bolstering the brutal regime of Bashar al Assad— making the likelihood of a political solution to end the bloodshed more distant.

In response to Russia's aggressive foreign policy, Congress passed and the President signed the *Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act* to impose an economic price on Russia's meddling in our international interests. And we must remain vigilant in countering Russia's attempts to meddle in our elections in the future.

## China

As Putin's grip on power remains solidified, China, under President Xi, continues to consolidate its control over all facets of Chinese government, military, commercial, and civilian life.

Last October, Xi was elevated into the People's Republic of China's Constitution, on par with Mao Zedong— one of the most brutal dictators we've seen in the history of the world.

We've seen Xi purge his competitors within the country and compel its commercial sector to support its destabilizing rise around the world.

The bottom line, China is on the rise, and its influence is expanding globally at a rapid pace. It is the Soviet Union of our times.

China is already building military bases around the world. As evidenced in Djibouti, this military expansionism is not peaceful.

It will grow as the One Belt, One Road expands – strangling the developing and developed world, suffocating freedom until its dying breath.

To counter China's immoral rise, we must support our allies, partners and friends, and expand our support to international development efforts.

### **Closing**

As we assess the threat landscape for 2018 and beyond, I urge us all to seek pragmatic solutions to address the challenges before us.

Solutions that improve the livelihoods of people around the world and protect those who cannot protect themselves.

We must shield freedom-craving people from the radical ideology and exploitation that terrorists and repressive regimes are attempting to infect them with.

We must protect those we are elected to serve by closing gaps that allow our enemies to infiltrate the homeland.

We must enable the United States to thrive at home, so that we can continue to support our friends abroad.

I say we because these threats are blind to party affiliation and require a holistic, bipartisan approach.

One that includes collaboration with state and local stakeholders, the private sector, federal law enforcement, the intelligence community, and our military.

One that requires us to work together with our foreign allies, partners, and friends.

Upholding this bipartisan tradition and maintaining American leadership on the world stage is very personal to me.

My father was a bombardier in WWII and participated in the D-Day campaign.

He bombed the Nazis and helped defeat the evil of his time.

He and his band of brothers did not think about politics when they were called to serve. They simply put their country first.

The example they set is one we should follow because as we know, freedom is never free, and we will always have to fight for it.



Ronald Reagan told us that – “Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction. We must pass it to our children in the bloodstream.

“It must be fought for, protected, and handed on for them to do the same, or one day we will spend our sunset years telling our children and our children’s children what it was once like in the United States where men were free.”

These are the challenges of our times. Just like my father’s generation – the greatest generation - which fought and defeated the fascism that threatened civilization then, I am confident we, too, will prevail.

Thank you, and God bless America.

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