



TESTIMONY OF

The Honorable Ken Cuccinelli  
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Deputy Secretary  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

BEFORE

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Committee on Homeland Security and Government Affairs

ON

“Threats to the Homeland”

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Good morning Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Peters, and distinguished members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) regarding today's threats to the Homeland. Born out of the ashes of 9/11, the American people tasked DHS with one purpose: to protect this great Nation and keep our citizens safe.

As Acting Secretary Wolf said in his recent State of the Homeland remarks, "the Department of Homeland Security is bound by one mission, one creed. Answering the call, often times in the most arduous of environments and difficult of circumstances, to safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values from all threats, all the time—both today, tomorrow, and in the months and years to come."

Although the threats facing our nation 17 years ago when DHS was founded have evolved significantly, DHS continues to be motivated to adapt in order to address these new and emerging threats.

DHS addresses these emerging threats with a clear mandate from President Trump: the safety, security and prosperity of the American people comes first. DHS, using our unique authorities, and in collaboration with our federal, state and local partners, will continue to make good on this promise.

Indeed, under the leadership of President Trump, the 240,000 men and women of the DHS family have been empowered to overcome new and challenging threats, as well as accomplish our enduring no-fail missions. Specifically:

- We are combating crises at the Southern Border—such as human trafficking, drug smuggling, and unprecedented illegal migration flows—while restoring integrity to the immigration system;
- We are maintaining vigilance against terrorist threats, foreign and domestic, within the bounds of our authorities;
- DHS has been a part of the Whole-of-America response to COVID-19, leveraging every aspect of our federal government through a locally-executed, state managed, and federally-supported strategy;
- We are protecting federal buildings and federal workforce, including federal law enforcement officers, from an emerging threat of violent rioters;
- We are preparing for and responding to natural disasters;
- We are identifying and preventing malign foreign actors and nation states from interfering in our elections and protecting our election infrastructure, as part of our broader mission to safeguard and secure cyberspace; and
- We are aggressively responding to the threat posed by China--now and in the future.

## **Border Security**

Nearly four years ago, the American people elected President Trump with a mandate to secure our borders and enact an America First immigration policy.

To stem the tide of human smuggling, drug smuggling, and criminal gangs flooding across our border and into our country, the Trump Administration has constructed more than 300 miles of the border wall system. Our work is not finished. We are on track to complete 450 miles by the end of 2020.

We have interdicted more than 4 million pounds of illegal drugs on the Southern Border, including methamphetamine, cocaine, as well as fentanyl and drug analogues originating from China. Most of these drugs are supplied by transnational crime organizations making billions in profits while tens of thousands of Americans die due to overdoses. With these efforts, the Trump Administration has inhibited the ability of these transnational criminal organizations to further devastate our communities—including every congressional district in America.

### **Restoring Integrity to the Immigration System**

Building the wall system is not a stand-alone solution to these problems. The wall fits into a greater, holistic approach to secure the border.

Through President Trump's diplomatic agreements and arrangements with our neighbors to the south, our allies have taken steps to secure their own borders. These include historic border security arrangements with Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador. A secure Mexico means a secure United States. A secure Honduras means a secure United States. A secure El Salvador and a secure Guatemala means a secure United States.

Under President Trump, we have made regulatory changes to enforce our immigration laws as Congress originally intended. We also have been able to enact a common-sense approach that not only supports our national security requirements but also protects the American worker. We have done so by terminating the dangerous "catch and release policy" and closing loopholes that led to asylum fraud and employment authorization abuse.

Our immigration system is not only designed to support national security requirements, but also protect American workers. Tightening our immigration system also fortifies economic security. The days are over of looking the other direction while allowing unfettered illegal foreign labor to flood our domestic labor markets, depress American wages, and strain our municipalities.

### **Terrorism**

The nation continues to face threats from foreign and domestic terrorists inside our borders—the threats that animated the Department's founding.

I'm proud to stand with the Acting Secretary and say that DHS has taken unprecedented actions to address all forms of violent extremism.

Last year, the Department released a comprehensive strategy that contextualizes the threats from violent extremists and lays out the DHS mission in preventing such violence. We secured—with help from Congress – additional funding in FY 2020 for these initiatives. And the President

requested a 300% increase in funding for DHS-wide efforts in this area in his FY 2021 Budget Request.

We recently released a Public Action Plan that outlines dozens of separate actions across the DHS enterprise designed to combat domestic terrorism, and just yesterday announced our FY20 Terrorism Prevention grant recipients.

Let me be clear: DHS stands in absolute opposition to any form of violent extremism. We will continue our daily efforts to combat all forms of domestic terror.

## **COVID-19 Response**

Of all the threats DHS has confronted in the last year, the COVID-19 pandemic has posed one of the most formidable, rapidly evolving, and uniquely challenging.

President Trump's decisive and rapid action led our federal government to pursue a Whole-of-America response, which continues to deliver results through a locally-executed, state-managed, and federally-supported strategy.

Early on, President Trump acted swiftly, banning travel from hot spots like China, to mitigate the impact of COVID-19. Despite criticism from certain politicians, the President's action saved lives. Our efforts to secure the border also directly correspond to DHS' unique authorities and mission to combat the spread of COVID-19.

CBP and FEMA play a particularly important role in serving the American people during this crisis.

On the domestic front, FEMA has marshalled all available resources to support President Trump's strategy to combat the pandemic and safely reopen America. FEMA processed the first ever nationwide emergency declaration under the Stafford Act. This was in addition to simultaneous major disaster declarations granted to all 50 states, 5 territories, and the District of Columbia.

Following the emergency declaration, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) requested DHS assistance in enforcing the Director's order issued under Title 42, which suspended the introduction into the United States of certain persons from countries where a communicable disease exists. To date, CBP has halted and expelled over 90 percent of aliens crossing the Southern Border within two hours of encountering them—an incredible feat and of critical importance to the public health and the protection of our workforce in response to COVID.

Under President Trump's direction, we utilized the Defense Production Act to procure more than 220 million respirators from the 3M Company, saving American lives. By taking historic action to better collaborate with the private sector, we have helped deliver and allocate billions of pieces of scarce PPE to our frontline healthcare workers and first responders.

FEMA has delivered millions of units of personal protective equipment (PPE) to our federal, state, territorial, and tribal government partners, allocated billions of dollars in public and individual assistance, and provided tremendous guidance to local officials.

In August, in the absence of Congressional action, President Trump authorized FEMA to use \$44 billion from the Disaster Relief Fund to alleviate the effects of lost wages due to COVID-19, allowing states to make supplemental payments to those receiving unemployment insurance compensation. FEMA acted in short order. As of September 8, FEMA has already provided more than \$29 billion to 47 states for Lost Wages Assistance to support American workers.

### **Civil Unrest/Riots**

While responding to the pandemic, we have simultaneously worked to combat the violence that has erupted in several metropolitan areas across the country.

In cities like Portland, Oregon, arsonists, looters, and agitators attacked federal property, law enforcement officers, and local small businesses.

For more than 60 days, DHS law enforcement personnel in Portland were under siege by a violent mob intent on destroying a federal courthouse. Federal law requires DHS to protect buildings, grounds, and property that are owned, occupied, or secured by the Federal government and the people on that property. Despite hundreds of injuries, our officers courageously held the line and fulfilled their statutory duty to defend federal property.

President Trump has offered federal assistance to every community that has suffered from this type of violence. DHS is proud to support our Department of Justice counterparts as they execute their Constitutional mandate to keep order in American cities when requested by our local partners and governments.

DHS is ready to assist in restoring peace should the communities request our support.

### **Natural Disasters**

The Department continues our role overseeing natural disaster response efforts during these unprecedented times.

DHS recognized early on that we would likely have to respond to the 2020 hurricane season while also continuing our efforts to counter COVID-19.

As Hurricane Laura was about to make landfall just last month, President Trump immediately authorized emergency disaster declarations for Texas, Louisiana, and Arkansas. And DHS personnel are responding to Hurricane Sally as we speak.

The President's decisive action and FEMA's prevention and preparedness measures continue to enable DHS to rapidly respond to that hurricane and any future natural disasters.

## **Election security**

DHS is committed to ensuring that our election system functions free from interference, both foreign and domestic. In that vein, the Administration has continually called out malign actors, such as China, Russia, and Iran, which seek to interfere in our elections and threaten our democracy.

DHS, through our Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA), continues to make progress securing the election systems and our nation's critical infrastructure. The 2018 midterm elections were the most secure in modern history, and DHS is working diligently with state and local election officials to make the 2020 elections even more secure.

As such, CISA is currently working with representatives from all 50 states, thousands of local jurisdictions, and our election technology partners to make sure they have the resources they need to keep our elections secure and resilient.

## **Securing Cyberspace and Emerging Threats**

Cyber threats to the homeland, from both state affiliated actors and cyber criminals have been and will remain one of the most prominent threats facing our nation. All levels of government and entities across the private sector, to include the vast array of critical infrastructure upon which we rely, are facing a constant barrage of multifaceted cyber-enabled threats. These threats are designed to access and collect sensitive information, to hold operational technology at risk, and interrupt the accessibility of vital networks.

DHS, including through the operations of CISA, the United States Secret Service, the U.S. Coast Guard, ICE-Homeland Security Investigations, and the Transportation Security Administration, is leveraging its full suite of authorities to mitigate this cyber threat, increase the resilience of those systems upon which our critical infrastructure sectors rely and impose costs on malicious cyber actors looking to leverage vulnerabilities for financial or other gain.

In addition, DHS, through its Science and Technology Directorate, works in collaboration with CISA and our federal partners to characterize and better understand emerging technological and science-based threats facing our nation's critical infrastructure.

## **China**

Surveying the threat landscape, one menacing actor is ever-present—China.

In the midst of our complex challenges, DHS must also confront an aggressive nation-state. The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) seeks to assert its influence in both overt and covert ways to achieve a variety of geopolitical and domestic goals. The Peoples Republic of China's (PRC) increasingly aggressive and bold actions—from undermining long-standing Hong Kong autonomy to attempting to build a data collection network that spans the globe—imperils the United States and the international rules-based order that DHS has helped to sustain and enforce since its inception.

Across a wide range of policy spheres, from threatening U.S. economic security and prosperity, to undermining the core notion of a secure representative democratic process, DHS is on the frontline of growing tensions with the PRC.

President Trump has taken unprecedented action issuing a presidential proclamation restricting travel of certain Chinese graduate students and researchers with ties to entities in China supporting China's military-civil fusion strategy to prevent them from stealing and otherwise appropriating sensitive research. DHS is working closely with the Department of State to enforce that presidential proclamation.

We are targeting illicit Chinese manufacturers who have exploited the COVID-19 pandemic by producing fraudulent or prohibited PPE and medical supplies that especially endanger our front-line workers.

We are preventing goods produced by forced labor from entering our markets and demanding that China respect the inherent dignity of each human being. CBP continued that effort just this week with the announcement of five Withhold Release Orders.

At our borders and our ports of entry, we are leveraging technology and innovation to target and interdict deadly Chinese-made fentanyl and fentanyl-like substances before they can destroy American communities and take American lives.

DHS is working with our interagency and industry colleagues to protect our information and communications infrastructure from intellectual property theft and nefarious data collection by China.

China's relentless barrage of attacks aimed at undermining American workers, American economic dominance, and the American way of life cannot be allowed to stand—and under President Trump, it won't. A policy of appeasement is not an option; it is a proven road to failure.

The power dynamic DHS is witnessing between the United States and China will be a focus for many years to come. In the near-term, DHS will continue to relentlessly respond to the threat posed by Beijing, consistent with the National Security Strategy and the Strategic Approach to the People's Republic of China.

## **Conclusion**

DHS continues to demonstrate its ability to take on and overcome wide ranging and diverse threats.

As we seek to fulfill our mission, the men and women of DHS look forward to continued cooperation with Congress so that together we can keep our citizens safe and secure.