



TESTIMONY

OF

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SECRETARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

REGARDING A HEARING ON

“A Review of the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”

BEFORE THE

UNITED STATES SENATE

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

July 27, 2021
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Peters, Ranking Member Portman, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Budget.

On a daily basis, the more than 240,000 men and women of DHS respond to our Nation's most serious threats. DHS employees rise to every challenge, and the challenges are many. DHS is aggressively pursuing the Administration's priorities and addressing some of the most critical and evolving threats to the United States. We are focusing on defeating the COVID-19 pandemic, advancing technology for border security while promoting a humane and efficient immigration system, combatting domestic violent extremism, and detecting, mitigating, recovering from, and responding to malicious cyber attacks. I would like to highlight the work we have undertaken so far at DHS under the Biden-Harris Administration, as well as the priorities included in the President's FY 2022 Budget.

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 has impacted every facet of American life, and DHS has been integral to the effort to successfully and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccinations across the country. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has helped vaccinate more than 5.6 million people at FEMA community vaccination center pilot program sites and remains committed to assisting government and nonprofit partners to help defeat this deadly pandemic. FEMA helped stand up over 2,000 federally-supported community vaccination centers and has obligated more than \$5.7 billion for federally-supported community vaccination centers across the country.

As Secretary, I have no greater obligation than that of ensuring the health and safety of our workforce, 80 percent of whom are front-line employees. Five days into the Biden-Harris Administration, DHS launched Operation Vaccinate Our Workforce (VOW) to accelerate the administration of COVID-19 vaccines on a voluntary basis to frontline DHS employees. On the first day of the Biden-Harris Administration, less than two percent of our front-line workers who elected to receive the vaccine had been vaccinated. Today, that share has grown to more than 77 percent. Prioritizing the health and safety needs of the DHS workforce has enabled us to fulfill our mission even in a constrained COVID-19 environment. Operation VOW partnered with the Veterans Health Administration to get COVID-19 vaccines into the arms of our front-line personnel.

Our public health and medical professionals from the Chief Medical Officer's staff participated in the whole-of-government approach to combat the pandemic by serving on the Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force, the Medical Countermeasures Task Force, and deploying as part of a tactical medical assistance team. These efforts resulted in life-saving Personal Protective Equipment preservation best practices; the accelerated development, manufacture, and availability of COVID-19 medical countermeasures; and the implementation of novel clinical and operational interventions that saved lives in diverse communities across the Nation.

Addressing the Challenges at the Border

Since April 2020, the number of encounters at the Southwest Border has increased due to

ongoing violence, natural disasters, food insecurity, and poverty in Central America and Mexico. This resulted in a substantial strain on the processing, transportation, and holding capacity of the U.S. Border Patrol (USBP), which was only exacerbated by the COVID-19 global pandemic. In following CDC recommendations to allow for social distancing, temporary holding capacity within USBP facilities was limited by up to 75 percent in certain instances. Compounding this challenge was the lack of long-term planning and a comprehensive strategic framework by the prior administration to address the root causes of the migration. They terminated the Central American Minors program and cut hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid to the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. As a result, the surge in unaccompanied children presented a serious challenge for DHS and our colleagues at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Simply put, the previous administration dismantled our Nation's immigration system. Addressing the factors that cause individuals and families to flee their homes in the first place and attempt the dangerous journey to our southern border is both aligned with our national interest and our values as a Nation.

The Biden-Harris Administration has been clear that we need to address this challenge beyond our borders by creating additional lawful pathways for migrants and individuals seeking protection to come to the United States. At the same time, we must work collaboratively with other countries in our region to manage migration and the challenge and responsibility of offering humanitarian protection in a more regular, orderly, and humane manner.

As a short-term solution to address the current challenge at the border, on March 13, I directed FEMA to support a government-wide effort to safely receive, shelter, and transfer unaccompanied children to HHS care and custody, and onward to a verified sponsor. FEMA immediately integrated and co-located with HHS to look at every available option to support a quick expansion of HHS's physical capacity for the care and custody of unaccompanied children, and to support HHS in managing overall operations. FEMA deployed more than 100 employees to help HHS identify locations for emergency shelters, oversee construction, and manage operations. DHS and HHS also terminated a 2018 agreement that undermined the interests of children and had a chilling effect on individuals from coming forward to sponsor an unaccompanied child placed in the care of HHS. In its place, DHS and HHS signed a new Memorandum of Agreement that promotes the safe and timely transfer of children without changing safeguards designed to ensure their safety.

Additionally, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) trained and deployed more than 350 of its personnel to interview unaccompanied children and potential sponsors, in order to provide case management for unaccompanied children in HHS custody at Emergency Intake Sites (EIS). As of July 21, 2021, USCIS personnel have conducted 13,302 interviews and recommended 10,156 children for release to a sponsor. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) also constructed additional soft-sided facilities and stood up the interagency Movement Coordination Cell to bring together colleagues from FEMA, HHS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and CBP to share a common operating picture. More than 700 additional DHS personnel volunteered to help through the DHS Volunteer Force.

Between March 13 and May 1, FEMA assisted in the activation of 14 HHS EIS facilities, that increased the potential temporary bed capacity when fully staffed by 19,987 beds, or 1,999

percent.

This additional bed capacity, along with improvements in the process of safely releasing unaccompanied children to sponsors, has resulted in a massive reduction in the number of unaccompanied children in CBP custody—from 5,767 at its peak on March 29 to 1,684 on July 21. During this same period, the number of unaccompanied children who have been in custody longer than 72 hours has decreased from 4,078 at its peak on March 29 to 150 on the morning of July 21, while average time in custody for unaccompanied children has fallen from 133 hours on March 29 to 37 hours on the morning of July 21. This progress was made, moreover, while CBP encountered an average of 15,500 unaccompanied children per month in April, May and June. For the seven-day period ending on July 20, CBP transferred an average of 491 unaccompanied children per day to HHS’ Office of Refugee Resettlement, approximately one-third of CPB’s total unaccompanied child population on a given day and keeping pace with daily encounters.

On July 2, 2021, we announced, along with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), a new initiative to support our Nation’s noncitizen service members, veterans, and the immediate family members of service members. The VA, DHS, and other partners are working to identify deported veterans to ensure they are able to obtain VA benefits to which they may be entitled. The VA, with support from DHS, is also working to ensure all veterans, including deported veterans and their families, are vaccinated. I have also directed USCIS, ICE, and CBP to immediately conduct a review of policies and practices to ensure that all eligible current and former noncitizen service members and the immediate families of military members are able to remain in or return to the United States, remove barriers to naturalization for those eligible, and improve access to immigration services. DHS and the VA will conduct the reviews in close partnership with the Department of Defense. In the coming weeks, DHS and the VA will also engage with the advocacy community serving noncitizen military service members, veterans, and immediate family members of service members to communicate our commitments, receive feedback on proposed initiatives, and announce further actions in support of this statement and in connection with the forthcoming review.

Stopping the Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism

As threats against the Nation evolve, it is critical that the Department adapts quickly and efficiently when necessary to meet any threat against the people of the United States. Domestic violent extremism (DVE) is typically fueled by false narratives, conspiracy theories, and extremist rhetoric spread through social media and other online platforms. The lethality of this threat is all too real, as witnessed during the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, and recent attacks across the United States, including against government buildings, personnel, and minority groups. DHS is prioritizing addressing this threat while improving the quality of our intelligence gathering and analysis, information sharing, and DVE detection, prevention, and response efforts.

Combatting this violence requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, which I have already initiated at DHS in collaboration with key partners, including the Department of Justice, to help ensure the violence and assault on democracy that occurred on January 6th does

not occur again. DHS has established a new, dedicated domestic terrorism branch within the Department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, and recently established a new Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships to further elevate the prevention mission at DHS. Further, DHS is increasing training opportunities for law enforcement partners, including through threat assessment and management programs related to DVE. DHS has also undertaken an internal review of the potential threat of DVE within the Department.

In February, I designated, for the first time, combatting DVE as a "National Priority Area" for the FY 2021 State Homeland Security Program and Urban Area Security Initiative grant program. As a result, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments are required to spend 7.5 percent of their DHS grant awards combatting this threat. On March 24, the Department made \$20 million available through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program to help communities across our country develop innovative capabilities to combat terrorism and targeted violence. On July 16, the Department announced \$180 million in grant awards to help more than 1,500 nonprofit organizations increase their security efforts against potential terrorist attacks, including DVE, based on the organization's mission, ideology, or beliefs.

Strengthening Cybersecurity and Resilience

Our Nation faces growing cyber threats from nation states and criminal groups alike. Over the past months, we discovered several intrusion campaigns impacting the federal government. The Colonial Pipeline and JBS ransomware attacks were a powerful reminder of the risks to our critical infrastructure and the impact malicious cyber activity can have on Americans' daily lives.

As the Nation's lead agency for protecting the federal civilian government and critical infrastructure against cybersecurity threats, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) serves a central role by enabling greater visibility into cybersecurity threats, strengthening incident response capabilities, and driving improvements in security practices. Congress recently empowered and further strengthened CISA through several provisions in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and funding in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that the Department is now focused on implementing.

On May 12, President Biden issued an Executive Order to protect federal government networks and to bolster our Nation's cybersecurity. This Order empowers DHS and our interagency partners to modernize federal cybersecurity, expand information sharing, and dramatically improve our ability to prevent, detect, assess, and remediate cyber incidents across the federal government. We are actively working to implement the Executive Order to help agencies improve their security posture, develop a standard playbook for incident response, and establish a Cyber Safety Review Board comprised of public and private sector stakeholders.

In addition to the NDAA and the Executive Order, I announced a series of 60-day "sprints" to mobilize action across the Department focusing on specific priority areas. In March, we launched the first sprint dedicated to elevating the fight against ransomware, a particularly egregious type of malicious cyber activity. We elevated ongoing efforts, created an internal task force, launched new initiatives domestically and internationally, and are fully engaged in the whole-of-government effort to address this urgent threat.

The second sprint focused on building a more robust and diverse workforce at the Department and beyond and led to the Department's most significant cybersecurity hiring initiative. We are currently in the midst of our sprint focusing on industrial control systems in support of the White House ICS Cybersecurity Initiative, and we are already planning the rollout of our sprint in the Fall dedicated to improving the cybersecurity and resilience of our transportation sector.

Funding Priorities for FY 2022

The President's FY 2022 Budget provides \$1.2 billion for effective and modern port and border security, which includes \$655 million for modernization of land ports of entry (POE); investments in modern border security technology and assets; and investments in modern facility design and construction. The Budget includes no additional funding for border wall construction, and requests that Congress cancel remaining border wall construction balances upon passage of an FY 2022 appropriations act. To expand our detection capabilities, CBP Air and Marine Operations seeks enhancements to aircraft sensors and additional aircraft acquisitions critical to surveillance along the Southwest Border. The President's FY 2022 Budget includes \$28 million for the first land interdiction configuration of the Multi-Role Enforcement Aircraft, which integrates with the \$9 million request for the U.S. Border Patrol small Unmanned Aircraft System program. The integration of these border security technologies will provide a common operating picture for law enforcement. At the POEs, CBP Officers continue to optimize Non-Intrusive Inspection technology, seeing through barriers and detecting concealed contraband. A \$47 million investment builds on their continued integration and deployment along our borders, while maintenance and system support ensure reliability on the front lines.

The President's FY 2022 Budget also supports the promise of a fair and equitable immigration system that both enforces our immigration laws and reflects the Nation's values. The Budget includes a 50 percent increase for case management services within the ICE Alternatives to Detention program. This funding is intended to ensure noncitizens are made aware of their legal obligations and therefore appear for enforcement proceedings, and it promotes a more transparent immigration system. In addition, this proposal reflects a new discretionary request of \$345 million for additional staff, equipment, and support services to administer the Nation's legal immigration system. These enhancements will provide resources to reduce application and petition backlogs and allow USCIS to develop interview capacity to meet the Administration's goal of admitting up to 125,000 refugees annually. Additionally, to ensure the safe and humane treatment of migrants at the Southwest Border, the request includes \$163 million for medical services for those in CBP custody. This funding covers intake health interviews, medical assessments, onsite diagnosis and treatment of basic medical conditions, and comprehensive follow-up and monitoring in austere conditions.

The President's FY 2022 Budget continues ongoing investments in CISA to address critical and pressing cyber, physical infrastructure, and emergency communications security issues. Accordingly, \$2.1 billion is requested for cyber activities including \$408 million for the National Cybersecurity Protection System and \$325 million for the Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation program. This request builds on the \$650 million already provided to CISA in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to respond to the recent Government-wide cyber breaches

and boost U.S. cyber defenses. It will also allow CISA to enhance its cybersecurity tools, hire highly qualified experts, and obtain support services to protect and defend Federal and critical infrastructure information technology systems.

In a constantly evolving security environment, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) continues to leverage emerging technology and enhanced screening. In FY 2022, TSA will invest \$127 million in the Secure Flight program, a risk-based, intelligence-driven watch-list program to identify potential threats. To balance the need for increased security without restricting freedom of movement for legitimate travelers, the President's FY 2022 Budget includes \$104 million to expand TSA's Computed Tomography (CT) screening capability. CT screening is the most impactful property-screening tool available today, leveraging 3D imagery and detection against non-conventional concealment methods, while eliminating the need for passengers to remove electronic items from carry-on bags. Recognizing long-term strategic goals, TSA also seeks to invest in their essential personnel through a Transportation Security Officer service-pay strategy, as well as the critical infrastructure supporting the more than 55,000 personnel of TSA.

The President's FY 2022 Budget reflects FEMA's continued intent to execute its mission while managing resources efficiently and effectively. This includes coordinating response and recovery missions and maintaining a highly-regarded and well-trained cadre of employees ready to respond to ongoing and future disasters. The Budget invests \$532 million above the FY 2021 enacted level to confront climate change, including significant investments in pre-disaster planning and resilience efforts, climate resilience grant programs, and investments in FEMA's incident management workforce. FEMA programs include a resilient infrastructure and communities grant program, which prioritizes climate resilience projects in vulnerable and historically underserved communities. In FY20, FEMA provided \$500 million in Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities grants to support more than 400 mitigation and resilience projects. President Biden recently announced that FEMA would double that investment this year, making \$1 billion available in FY21. FEMA has projected \$18.8 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund, providing immediate assistance to families and communities affected by disasters to rebuild and recover. In addition to advancing long-term strategies via this request, FEMA remains focused on the ongoing COVID-19 response and will continue working with partners to defeat this deadly pandemic.

The U.S. Coast Guard is in the midst of the largest recapitalization effort in its history, an effort critical to building the Coast Guard our Nation needs to meet increasingly complex national security threats and to advance America's economic prosperity. In FY 2022, the Coast Guard seeks to continue its momentum in this effort, with \$170 million for Long Lead Time Materials for Polar Security Cutter #3, as well as \$597 million supporting the construction of Offshore Patrol Cutter construction. The President's FY 2022 Budget also adds \$116 million for sustainment and crewing of new cutters, boats, and aircraft, as well as \$194 million to address maintenance backlogs on Coast Guard surface and aviation assets.

The men and women of the U.S. Secret Service protect our Nation's highest elected and appointed leaders, visiting foreign heads of state, facilities, and major events. The President's FY 2022 Budget includes \$2.6 billion to support the Secret Service's critical missions, ranging from continued investment in Fully Armored Vehicles to empowering state and local law enforcement

through partnership with the National Computer Forensics Institute.

I have outlined above some of the many operational successes and challenges throughout the Department and the fiscal priorities included in the President's FY 2022 Budget for DHS. The strategic investments that each DHS Component initiates directly impact the readiness, preparedness, flexibility, and success of the Department in its mission to secure the homeland.

I am honored to support and represent the dedicated DHS workforce. Their commitment to the dynamic homeland security mission is unwavering, and I vow to do everything in my authority as Secretary to ensure they are resourced, compensated, and recognized appropriately. Therefore, I ask for your continued support in providing the resources we need to meet our mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department's President's FY 2022 Budget submission. I welcome any questions you have at this time.