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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

August 1, 2017

CHRISTOPHER R. HIXON, STAFF DIRECTOR
MARGARET E. DAUM, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

Elaine C. Duke
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
3801 Nebraska Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20016

Dear Ms. Duke:

I am writing regarding a May 26, 2017, bulletin from the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis warning law enforcement and first responders about the threat of violent extremists poisoning or adulterating U.S. food supplies.

While the bulletin noted that DHS has “not seen any specific, credible terrorist threats against Homeland food production and distribution infrastructure,” it pointed out that corruption of Western food supplies has been a longtime terrorist interest. It also stated that “[t]he mere threat of product adulteration in the Homeland would almost certainly cause psychological and economic harm.”¹

The bulletin listed possible indicators of targeting food supplies. Many of these appear to be common-sense, such as damaged food product seals, wrappers, or packaging, or the surveillance of food storage facilities. Others, however, are vague, including “loitering or strange behavior near buffets [or] salad bars...”²

American farmers, processors, distributors, retailers, and inspectors take great care in ensuring that our nation sets a global standard for food safety. As result, Americans often take great confidence—and sometimes even take for granted—that the food they buy at grocery stores and restaurants is safe to eat. I am concerned about any threat that could undermine that confidence in our country’s food supply.

In order to fulfill my Congressional responsibility to conduct oversight of the Department of Homeland Security, I ask that you provide my staff a briefing to answer the following questions:

¹ *DHS issues warning to better protect U.S. food supply*, WTOP (June 27, 2017) (<http://wtop.com/national-security/2017/06/dhs-issues-warning-better-protect-us-food-supply/>).

² *DHS issues warning to better protect U.S. food supply*, WTOP (June 27, 2017) (<http://wtop.com/national-security/2017/06/dhs-issues-warning-better-protect-us-food-supply/>).

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1. What evidence is there that extremist groups or individuals are targeting American food supplies?
2. What is DHS doing to identify threats to American food supplies?
3. Besides warning first responders about indicators of food supply tampering, how is DHS protecting American food supplies from possible contamination?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Please have your staff contact Hannah Berner with my Committee staff at (202) 224-5065 with any questions. Please send any official correspondence relating to this request to Amanda_Trosen@hsgac.senate.gov.

Sincerely,



Claire McCaskill
Ranking Member

cc: Ron Johnson
Chairman