

Opening Statement of Chairman Johnson
“Initial Observations of the New Leadership at the U.S. Border Patrol”
Wednesday, November 30, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Today’s hearing marks the 19th hearing the committee has convened related to the security of our borders this Congress. In my opening statement at the first of these hearings, I acknowledged that securing our borders would be incredibly complex. I then promised to develop information and build a strong record discussing these challenges. Over the last 23 months, we have done just that.

The committee convened hearings on the southwest, northern and maritime borders. We held hearings on the visa waver and refugee resettlement programs. We considered biometric entry/exit and infrastructure and technology needs across our borders. We discussed the challenges of transnational crime along the border, convened four field hearings on the opioid epidemic sweeping this country, and explored how America’s insatiable demand for drugs drives our borders’ insecurity. We brought in witnesses from both the administration and the front line, including the Border Patrol union, local sheriffs, and landowners who are forced to deal with the challenges that our insecure borders present every day in their communities. And we focused on multiple pull factors, such as wage disparities, Obama administration policies, and the unintended consequences of laws created by Congress that encourage people to embark on the dangerous journey from Central America to the United States.

Today, we continue the process of laying out the reality of our insecure borders, this time hearing from the U.S. Border Patrol’s newest leaders. Chief Morgan is the first person from outside the agency to be appointed to the position of chief of the U.S. Border Patrol. Chief Morgan has more than 20 years of federal law enforcement experience with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where he served in numerous leadership roles. Deputy Chief Provost is the first woman in the Border Patrol’s 92-year history to be promoted to deputy chief, the second highest position in the U.S. Border Patrol. Deputy Chief Provost started her career as a field agent in Douglas, Arizona, and also has more than 20 years of federal law enforcement experience.

Chief Morgan and Deputy Chief Provost will present their observations on the agency and provide their perspective on conditions at our borders. We will discuss the recent surge in apprehensions along the southwest border and how the need to dedicate extensive resources to this humanitarian mission affects the agency’s other missions, such as its national security mission. Finally, we will examine ways this committee and the Border Patrol can work together to meet the challenges of an ever-changing border environment.

I thank both witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony.