

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Protecting America from the Threat of ISIS”**

Thursday, May 26, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for holding this hearing to examine how our government is working to keep Americans safe in light of the recent terror attacks we've seen around the world. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the people of Belgium and France, who have not only endured losses from terror attacks in their capital cities, but also the recent tragedy involving the disappearance of the EgyptAir flight that departed from Charles De Gaulle Airport in Paris. While we are still learning the facts surrounding the loss of the EgyptAir flight, this tragedy reminds us that securing our homeland is likely to remain an ongoing challenge for some time to come. Our efforts must adapt as groups like ISIS evolve their tactics.

Securing our borders and our immigration system is obviously a key element of keeping us safe, and we've focused quite a bit on those topics of late. Hearings on the Syrian refugee program, the security of the visa waiver program, and the thoroughness of all visa screening efforts bear witness to our focus. We found that the Syrian refugee screening process takes upwards of two years, that DHS has enhanced the security of the Visa Waiver program three times in the past 18 months, and that our government deploys special visa teams abroad to help consular officers detect fraud.

Securing our borders, however, is only half the battle. We could shut down all travel and immigration to this country and still not be safe from terrorist threats. That's because--as Peter Bergen testified in November--'every person who's been killed by a jihadi terrorists in this country since 9/11 has been killed by an American citizen or resident.' The people who carried out these attacks weren't foreign students, tourists or refugees. They were American citizens or legal residents. And in many cases, they had spent much of their lives in the United States.

For instance, the Tsarnaev brothers spent nearly a decade in the United States before carrying out the Boston Marathon bombing. Major Nidal Hassan was born and raised in America and was serving in the U.S. Army when he committed the Fort Hood attack. Syed Farooq spent most of his life in California before he and his wife committed the San Bernardino massacre. Unfortunately, ISIS knows all too well that the best way to attack America is to have Americans do it for you. That's why ISIS has put an emphasis on using social media and the internet to radicalize Americans here at home.

In order to counter homegrown terrorist attacks, we have to do our best to make sure that, when ISIS makes its recruitment pitch to Americans, their twisted message falls on deaf ears. But if ISIS is successful at radicalizing Americans, we must also be vigilant in ensuring—to the best of our ability—that we can stop almost any terrorist plot well before an attack can be carried out.

Let me be clear. DHS and other agencies are not alone in tackling the threat of homegrown terrorism. Congress must help. Indeed, all Americans must help. We can start by taking action to

keep weapons—whether they are explosives, dirty bomb materials, or guns—out of the hands of terrorists. We also need to improve the ability of our law enforcement and intelligence agencies to detect homegrown terrorism plots by helping them work through their challenges on encryption. Finally, we need to give our federal agencies the tools they need to help prevent our young people from falling prey to ISIS’s online propaganda.

Late last year, I authored legislation to empower the Department of Homeland Security to tackle this challenge. This bill would create an office at DHS tasked with working with community groups, families—especially young people—and religious leaders to develop community-based solutions for stopping the recruitment of young Americans into ISIS. My bill was reported out of committee earlier this year. It was also included in the DHS Accountability Act we approved yesterday. We need to get this bill enacted into law as soon as possible so that we can further help our communities resist ISIS’s recruitment efforts.

Secretary Mayorkas and Mr. Siberell, I want to commend you and your departments for the work you do to protect Americans from terrorist attacks at home and abroad. We stand ready to work with you both to make sure that your Departments have the resources you need to combat these threats. Thank you both for your testimony. Thank you even more for your leadership and for your selfless devotion to serving this country of ours. We look forward to a very productive hearing.