

Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson  
*“Securing the Border: Understanding Threats and  
Strategies for the Northern Border”*  
April 22, 2015

*As prepared for delivery:*

Good morning and welcome.

Today marks our fifth hearing focused on border security, this time to define the threats we face on the northern border. The threats at our northern border differ from the threats at our southwest border: There are fewer illegal crossings at the northern border and less contraband originating from Canada. We also have stronger information sharing with Canada to help assess significant threats before they reach our border. But the U.S.-Canada border constitutes the longest border in the world, and the remoteness of parts of it ensures that threats continue to exist and must be taken seriously.

The continental border from Washington State to Maine and along Alaska is more than 5,500 miles long, and it includes dense forests, rugged mountains, open plains and vast lakes. Canadian criminal groups exploit this terrain throughout the year. For example, in the Great Lakes region, traffickers use small vessels during the summer and snowmobiles during the winter to smuggle drugs, people and illicit goods. Smugglers' ability to deliver contraband demonstrates that there are security gaps along the northern border that must be addressed.

While the vast majority of illegal drugs entering the U.S. arrive across the southwest border, Canada is the largest provider of MDMA (commonly known as ecstasy) to Milwaukee and other cities in the Great Lakes region. According to the 2014 National Northern Border Counternarcotics Strategy, criminal groups based in British Columbia, Ontario and Quebec smuggle MDMA, methamphetamine and heroin into the U.S. while simultaneously transporting large volumes of cocaine, cigarettes and weapons into Canada.

Additionally, heinous acts inspired by Islamic terror groups less than 100 miles away from our northern border represents a serious threat to U.S. national security. Just last month, the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) arrested a man for plotting to bomb the U.S. consulate in Toronto. This and other recent events in Canada remind us of the importance of remaining vigilant against acts of terrorism and lone-wolf fighters. We must understand the nexus between drug cartels and international terrorism and continue working with our Canadian counterparts to prevent terrorist travel in North America.

This hearing will assess U.S. efforts with Canada coordinated through the Beyond the Border initiative to combat cross-border criminal activity, unlawful crossings and terrorist threats before they reach the U.S.-Canada border. Specifically, we will examine the bi-national law enforcement partnerships in place between the U.S. and Canada to leverage resources and to maintain domain awareness of areas that are difficult to patrol.

I thank all the witnesses for testifying today and I look forward to your testimony.