

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: The FY24 DHS Budget: Resources and Authorities Requested to
Protect and Secure the Homeland
April 18, 2023

Welcome back to the Committee, Secretary Mayorkas, and thank you for your continued service to our nation.

The Department of Homeland Security and its dedicated employees have faced no shortage of challenging missions over the past few years. We are grateful for your steadfast commitment to protecting Americans.

Today's hearing is an important opportunity for Secretary Mayorkas to detail the Department's plans for the resources included in the President's 2024 budget request so that the Committee can assess what resources and authorities DHS needs to fulfill its critical missions to safeguard our nation from rapidly evolving security threats.

I am pleased to see that this year's proposal includes several investments to help combat persistent and evolving threats to people in Michigan and all across the country.

For example, relentless cyber-attacks from criminal organizations and foreign governments continue to pose serious threats and disruptions to Americans' daily lives.

We must ensure that the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, also known as CISA, has the resources to stop sophisticated cyber-attacks.

I'm grateful that the 2024 budget proposal includes significant resources for CISA, our nation's lead cybersecurity agency, to address these serious threats.

I'm also glad to see that your request includes funding to help implement my law requiring critical infrastructure owners and operators to report to CISA if they experience a cyber-attack or make a ransomware payment, which will help warn other potential targets and allow law enforcement to hold cybercriminals accountable.

We know cyber-attackers will stop at nothing to infiltrate our networks, and we must continue to strengthen our cybersecurity defenses to prevent further attacks.

Our nation also faces a number of threats to the safety and security of our communities that DHS must address.

Domestic terrorism driven by white supremacist and anti-government extremists continues to be the most significant terrorism threat to the United States.

I have continued to press DHS to adequately track and report data on the domestic terrorism threat. Despite being required to do so by a law Senator Johnson and I authored, DHS continues to fall short on collecting and reporting this critical information.

I have been pleased to see that more recently, the Department has done more to track and share information about the domestic terrorism threat, and I will continue to work with our colleagues and DHS to ensure that we are devoting the appropriate resources to prevent any such attacks.

We also face potential threats from weaponized biological, chemical, nuclear, and radioactive materials that are capable of inflicting mass casualties and destruction on our country.

Last Congress, I introduced bipartisan legislation to reauthorize and strengthen the DHS office responsible for managing these threats. These authorities are set to expire, but the threats remain, so I will work with my colleagues on a bipartisan basis to ensure these vital protections are extended.

Similarly, authorities to help prevent attacks from unmanned aerial systems, more commonly known as drones, are also set to expire. Whether they are being used recklessly or by an operator who has harmful intentions, drones could pose serious security threats to mass gatherings like sporting events, concerts and more.

Senator Johnson and I also introduced legislation on this last Congress, and I will continue work to reauthorize and strengthen needed authorities to counter the escalating threats from drones to protect public safety, critical infrastructure facilities and airports.

I'm also looking forward to discussing the Department's plans to secure our Northern and Southern borders.

With the expected wind down of Title 42 next month, we must ensure that DHS is prepared to address the irregular flows of migrants at our Southern border, and I look forward to hearing more about the Department's plans to address that change.

The Administration is also taking efforts to better secure our ports of entry and prevent illegal drugs like fentanyl from reaching our communities including by investing in more non-intrusive inspection equipment.

These efforts are a vital part of ensuring secure and efficient lawful trade and travel at our ports of entry so that border states like my home state of Michigan, remain a hub for international commerce.

Last spring, I was honored to host Secretary Mayorkas in Michigan to hear firsthand from members of Michigan's Arab and Muslim American communities who have, for years, endured lengthy and intrusive secondary travel screenings.

Although DHS has the critical mission of protecting our transportation systems, it must do so in a way that respects civil rights and civil liberties.

Mr. Secretary, we have spoken about the President's promise to examine the terrorist watchlist and No Fly List, it is time to accelerate this interagency effort and bring relief to these and other communities.

Finally, natural disasters driven by global climate change present one of the most serious security threats to our nation and to the world.

I've been proud to work with DHS on efforts to mitigate damage from natural disasters, and we must ensure that Department has the appropriate resources to protect communities from the consequences of these severe weather events.

However, I am concerned about the process for a current reorganization of FEMA's Resilience office, the Committee has been asking for an update for the past 5 months, but FEMA has yet to provide one.

I hope for greater transparency and partnership between DHS and the Committee for this, and future, reorganizations.

I look forward to having a productive discussion today about the Department's missions and plans to address the many homeland security threats facing our nation.