



TESTIMONY OF

Alejandro N. Mayorkas
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

BEFORE

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental
Affairs
United States Senate

ON

“Fiscal Year 2025 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland
Security”

April 18, 2024
Washington, DC

Introduction

Chair Peters, Ranking Member Paul, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 President's Budget.

Since its inception, the Department has continuously evolved to achieve its mission. It has done so in an increasingly dynamic threat landscape through new programs and capabilities, cross-component collaboration, and unflinching dedication. Today, we are the third largest department in the Federal Government with a 268,000-member workforce. Every day, our personnel interact with the U.S. public more than any other Federal agency as we ensure the safety and security of all Americans, promote lawful trade and travel, protect our critical infrastructure, develop resilience to man-made and natural disasters, respond when disaster strikes, advance the security of cyberspace and modernize information technology, combat human trafficking and online child sexual exploitation, protect communities from illicit drugs and weapons, safeguard our borders, defend U.S. interests in the Arctic and the Indo-Pacific, guard our federal buildings, and much more.

The FY 2025 President's Budget for the Department totals \$107.9 billion, providing the resources needed to keep our nation safe, strong, and prosperous. This funding supports the Department's ever-evolving mission set and aligns with key Presidential priorities. The Budget continues investments to advance our mission to combat terrorism, to secure our borders and enforce immigration law, to counter threats of fentanyl and other illicit drugs, to promote a humane and efficient system of refugee processing, and to address personnel needs. The Budget supports Indo-Pacific engagement and readiness operations. It supports investing in and building a resilient nation, laying a foundation for the responsible use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), and bolstering cyber defenses and national resilience. This testimony highlights FY2025 investments which ensure the Department has the resources it needs to enforce our laws and keep the American people, our homeland, and our values secure.

Of the \$107.9 billion requested in FY 2025, \$62.2 billion is discretionary budget authority, and \$22.7 billion is for the Disaster Relief Fund to enable response and recovery efforts during major disasters and emergencies and to build resilience to natural hazards. A TSA legislative proposal related to fees, if enacted, would decrease net discretionary appropriations by \$1.6 billion by directing more offsetting collections directly to TSA. The Budget also includes a proposed \$4.7 billion Southwest Border Contingency Fund to respond to changing conditions on the Southwest Border.

The Budget includes, and reiterates the need for, the Administration's border and disaster supplemental requests transmitted to Congress in October, which total \$17.9 billion for DHS. Additionally, DHS urges Congress to pass the Senate's bipartisan border security supplemental in order to provide vital funding and authorities in the Department's efforts to secure the Southwest Border, build capacity to enforcement immigration law and counter trafficking in fentanyl.

I am eager to work with Congress to deliver for the American people and the men and women who protect our Homeland.

Advance Our Mission to Combat Terrorism

The President's Budget supports the Department's continued efforts to combat terrorism, both domestically and abroad. The FY 2025 Budget fully funds the DHS Special Events Program, a critical program that gathers information on more than 57,000 special events, to identify and assess terrorism risk to high profile events across the Nation and facilitates the risk rating of special events using the Special Events Assessment Rating (SEAR) methodology.

The President's Budget provides \$418.0 million to support the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office (CWMD), increasing our security against chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) terrorist threats. Funding of \$181.4 million provided to CWMD in the President's Budget are dedicated to support state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) partners by building personnel and technical capabilities and increasing knowledge regarding CBRN threats and incidents.

Continuing to invest in innovative solutions is vital in countering weapons of mass destruction and to the Department's frontline personnel who rely on such technologies, including United States Coast Guard (USCG) Special Mission Units. The President's Budget provides \$138.3 million to ensure CWMD possesses the resources needed for research, acquisition, development, test, and evaluation of next generation technology to bolster environmental biodetection and chemical defense programs.

The Budget includes an \$80 million increase for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), which provides target hardening and other physical security enhancements for nonprofit organizations at high risk of terrorist attack, including places of worship. The NSGP is designed to integrate nonprofit preparedness activities with broader state and local preparedness efforts. It is also designed to promote coordination and collaboration in emergency preparedness activities among public and private community representatives, as well as state and local government agencies. Additionally, the budget includes \$18 million for the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grants to support activities to prevent the recruitment or radicalization of individuals to violence by interrupting those efforts, building community-level resilience, and identifying the early signs of radicalization to violence and providing appropriate interventions through civic and public health organizations, law enforcement, or other entities.

Securing the Border and Facilitating Lawful Trade and Immigration

Countries throughout the Western Hemisphere and across the world continue to face unprecedented levels of migration inflamed by violence, food insecurity, corruption, dire economic conditions, and the lingering effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Failing authoritarian regimes in Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua, and an ongoing humanitarian and security crisis in Haiti and Ecuador, have driven millions from their homes. Several countries' uncooperative governments severely restrict our ability to return their nationals. Migrants from the Middle East, Central Asia, Africa, and Asia are using pathways through Central and South America to

reach the United States. Migratory movements are often leveraged by human smuggling organizations that exploit migrants for profit as part of a billion-dollar criminal enterprise.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) work together to secure America's borders and enforce our nation's immigration laws. CBP is responsible for securing our nation's borders to protect against terrorist threats, combat and deter transnational crime, and facilitate lawful travel, trade, and immigration. ICE protects our nation through criminal investigations and enforcing immigration laws to preserve national security and public safety and stands at the forefront of our nation's efforts to strengthen border security, counter fentanyl, and prevent the illegal movement of people and goods. The FY 2025 Budget includes \$25.9 billion for CBP and ICE to continue these vital functions and significant investment in personnel and technology to carry out these critical mission sets.

The requested CBP funding includes an increase of \$210.3 million that would support the hiring of an additional 350 Border Patrol Agents, an additional 310 Border Patrol Processing Coordinators, 150 CBP Officers, and 411 Operational and Mission Support Personnel. Additional field agents and support staff will bolster situational awareness, respond to enhanced levels of migration, and advance the enforcement mission. It supplements CBP's efforts to reduce reliance on the Department of Defense by including \$39.8 million to sustain Integrated Surveillance Towers along the Southwest Border. The Budget also provides \$26.2 million for research and development efforts in critical operational capabilities such as Counter-Unmanned Aircraft.

Requested ICE funding includes \$2 billion to sustain 34,000 ICE Enforcement and Removal Operations (ERO) immigration detention beds. The Southwest Border Contingency Fund will resource additional detention beds if conditions require increased capacity.

The request of \$2.5 billion for ICE Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) would fund additional personnel and technology enhancements for investigative capacities, including a \$21 million increase for child exploitation investigations, a vital national asset in the global fight against transnational criminal threats. These investigations helped inform a forthcoming national public awareness campaign. Children, teens, parents, trusted adults, and policymakers will be educated and empowered to prevent and combat online child sexual exploitation and abuse; learn how to report online enticement and victimization; and obtain response and support resources for victims and survivors of online child sexual exploitation. We look forward to launching this campaign with our partners this month.

Working within a broken immigration system and in the face of enormous challenges and consistently insufficient funding, DHS faithfully enforces the law to secure our borders. We are removing and returning record numbers of migrants who are unable to establish a legal basis to remain in the United States. Since mid-May 2023, we removed or returned more than 630,000 individuals, the vast majority of whom crossed the Southwest Border, including nearly 100,000 individuals in family units. Total removals and returns in the last 11 months exceed removals and returns in every full fiscal year since 2013.

Countering Fentanyl

Fentanyl is one of the deadliest drugs our country has ever faced. It is 50 times stronger than heroin and remarkably cheap and easy to produce. The profit potential and potency of small doses of fentanyl complicate efforts for law enforcement personnel cracking down on smuggling operations. CBP and ICE are working together with federal, state, and local partners to successfully combat transnational criminal organizations and counter their trafficking in fentanyl and other controlled substances. The Department has stopped more illicit fentanyl and arrested more individuals for fentanyl-related crimes in the last two fiscal years than in the previous five years combined.

The Department's FY 2025 Budget includes critical investments in the fight against fentanyl. Through investments in Non-Intrusive Inspection technology and targeted operations such as Operations Artemis, Rolling Wave, and Argus, CBP and ICE HSI increased the interdiction of fentanyl, fentanyl precursors, and collateral contraband, in particular the pill presses used to manufacture fentanyl. The Administration is also prepared to send to Congress a legislative proposal to cement the Unity Agenda Strategy to combat the fentanyl epidemic.

Supporting Refugee Processing and a Fair, Orderly, and Humane Immigration System

The Biden-Harris Administration is committed to safeguarding the integrity of our nation's immigration system by efficiently and fairly adjudicating requests for immigration benefits. U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) provides safe, lawful pathways for migration. The FY 2025 Budget includes \$265 million for USCIS to bolster refugee processing in support of the Administration's goal to welcome up to 125,000 refugees from across the world, including up to 50,000 from the Western Hemisphere; expand the E-Verify Program; and support the Citizenship and Integration Grant Program.

Investing in Cybersecurity and Emergency Communications

The Department's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) serves as both America's cyber defense agency and as the national coordinator for critical infrastructure security and resilience.

President Biden signed the *Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act of 2022* (CIRCIA) into law in March 2022. To meet CIRCIA's requirements, CISA must add new staff, update existing programs, and implement new processes and technologies. The FY 2025 Budget includes critical resources to facilitate CISA's ability to receive, analyze, and share reports required under CIRCIA once regulatory reporting requirements become effective. The Budget includes \$115.9 million to help ensure CISA has sufficient funds for staffing, operations, and technology to successfully implement CIRCIA.

The FY 2025 Budget also includes \$394.1 million to support the Joint Collaborative Environment, which enables CISA to fulfill its mission of centralizing and synthesizing cyber threat and vulnerability data across federal, SLTT, and private sector stakeholders, and rapidly work with these stakeholders to reduce associated risk.

Additionally, the Budget includes \$469.8 million for Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation to complete mobile asset deployments, continue cloud asset deployments to fill capability gaps, and align to agency zero-trust use cases. Funding also sustains existing Endpoint Detection and Response investments and incorporates sensors to increase operational visibility within the Network Security Management capability.

The Federal Government continues to leverage TSA's unique authorities – including the ability to issue Security Directives and Emergency Amendments within hours of receiving information about a threat – to address cyber threats. Cyber threats grew dramatically over the past decade and that growth shows no sign of slowing down. Accordingly, the FY 2025 Budget includes an increase of \$15 million to conduct critical mission support functions to reduce cyber threats to American critical infrastructure in both near and mid-terms, and in support of both the surface and aviation sectors.

Responsibly Deploying Artificial Intelligence Technology

At the Department of Homeland Security, we embrace the responsibility to ensure that AI is developed and adopted in a way that realizes its full potential while protecting the public from any harm its irresponsible or adversarial use might cause. The FY 2025 Budget enables the Department to responsibly leverage AI and machine learning to advance our homeland security missions while protecting individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. Funding includes \$5.0 million for a new AI Office, led by the Chief AI Officer, within the Office of the Chief Information Officer. The AI Office will be responsible for setting priorities, directing policies, and oversight of the responsible use of AI across DHS.

DHS will continue to deploy AI tools across strategic areas of the homeland security enterprise, including efforts to counter fentanyl, combat child sexual exploitation and abuses, deliver immigration services, secure travel, fortify our critical infrastructure, and enhance our cybersecurity. Consistent with President Biden's Executive Order, DHS will also direct funds to manage AI in critical infrastructure and cyberspace, promote the adoption of global AI safety standards, reduce the risk that AI can be used to create weapons of mass destruction and other related threats, combat AI-related intellectual property theft, and help the United States attract and retain skilled talent.

The FY 2025 Budget provides additional AI funds for talent recruitment programs that will benefit DHS missions, including the DHS AI Corps that launched in February to hire 50 AI experts in the Department. The effort has already received over 3,000 applications. Funds will also support training programs to build AI literacy across the Department's workforce and secure AI systems in critical infrastructure. The funds will also support existing ICE, CBP, and Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) programs ensuring investment and expansion in line with Executive Order 14110, *Safe, Secure, and Trustworthy Development and Use of Artificial Intelligence*.

In March 2024, we introduced the DHS AI Roadmap, which outlines the Department's AI initiatives and the technology's potential across the homeland security enterprise. It is the most detailed AI plan put forward by a federal agency to date, directing our efforts to fully

realize AI's potential to protect the American people and our homeland, while steadfastly protecting privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

Our roadmap for the coming year includes exploring new AI applications and pursuing a whole-of-government strategy for ensuring the safe, secure, and trustworthy development and use of AI. We are seeking to engage partners across government, the private sector, and academia to bolster our nation's security.

Investing in a Disaster-Resilient Nation

FEMA strengthens the nation's ability to prepare for and respond to disasters of all types and magnitudes via partnerships with SLTT governments and the delivery of assistance to disaster survivors. In January, DHS announced historic changes to FEMA's Individual Assistance Program that ensure survivors will be provided with faster and easier access to resources they need immediately after a disaster. Last month, these changes went into effect and they will transform how we interact with survivors and empower individuals and communities in all future disasters.

The Budget includes increased funding for programs and activities that support FEMA's goals to lead whole-of-community efforts in resilience and promote and sustain a prepared nation. The FY 2025 Budget provides a major disaster allocation totaling \$22.7 billion for FEMA to assist SLTT partners and individuals affected by major disasters and emergencies. This funding will support FEMA's continued recovery efforts from the devastating Maui fire, Hurricanes Maria, Fiona, and Ian, and other major disaster activity. In Maui our teams are on the ground delivering assistance in Lahaina and across Maui. As the roads are cleared and debris removed, as a temporary elementary school has opened, and as survivors begin to rebuild their homes, FEMA will continue to be there on the long road to recovery. The funding Congress provides directly impacts our ability to ensure survivors have the assistance they need to return to Lahaina and their community. The Budget provides approximately \$3.2 billion in FEMA grants bolstering SLTT community partnerships to improve the nation's disaster resilience and preparedness strategies and includes the previously mentioned \$385 million for the NSGP.

Increasing Coast Guard Presence in the Indo-Pacific Region

The U.S. Coast Guard is a vital part of the Administration's national security vision. Increasing USCG's presence in the Indo-Pacific region is critical to that vision, the investments detailed below will enable a stable, free, and open region, and solidify the United States as a trusted partner in the region.

The FY 2025 Budget provides \$12.3 billion in net discretionary funding to sustain current readiness, resilience, and capabilities while building the Coast Guard of the future. The Budget expands efforts for the Coast Guard's two highest acquisition priorities, the Offshore Patrol Cutter (OPC) and Fast Response Cutter (FRC). The OPC replaces the Coast Guard's fleet of Medium Endurance Cutters that conduct missions on the high seas and coastal approaches while FRC funding expands the program of record and construction of two FRCs in support of the nation's Indo-Pacific Strategy. Of the \$263 million provided to USCG, \$200 million will

increase the FRC fleet from 65 to 67 boats, which are well-equipped to engage with partner nations throughout the region.

The Budget also provides funding to support training, partnerships, and meaningful engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. For example, it includes funds for an Indo-Pacific based Coast Guard Marine Transportation System (MTS) Assessment Team that will drive regional economic prosperity by performing vital Ports and Waterways Safety Assessments, Port Access Route Studies, and Waterways Analysis and Management System studies. Additionally, the budget also funds a Maritime Engagement Team focused on bolstering partner-nation capacity, and regional maritime advisors, liaison officers, attachés, legal support, and foreign engagement personnel that will support the U.S. presence and our interests in the region.

The 2024 Presidential Campaign and National Special Security Events

The U.S. Secret Service (USSS) protects the President, the Vice President, their immediate families, visiting heads of state, other designated individuals, and the White House Complex, the Vice President's residence, foreign diplomatic missions, and other designated buildings. Additionally, the USSS coordinates security at National Special Security Events, such as the State of the Union Address, the United Nations General Assembly, and international summits hosted in the United States, such as the upcoming NATO Summit. The Service also protects the nation's financial infrastructure by investigating counterfeiting, identity theft, computer fraud, and other financial security crimes.

This year, the USSS will increase protective details, travel and overtime related to the Presidential Campaign. The FY 2025 Budget includes \$70 million to ensure the 2024 Presidential Campaign is adequately resourced for the protection of major candidates, designated nominees, their spouses, and nominating conventions. This funding supports enhanced protection, security, travel, and overtime for the 2024 Presidential Campaign and includes resources to train USSS personnel and other federal partner agencies.

The President's Budget includes \$16.0 million to support planning and prepositioning of assets needed for the protection of the 2026 FIFA World Cup and \$19 million for other NSSEs.

Modernizing TSA Pay and Workforce Policies

Every day, TSA personnel help millions of travelers reach their destinations safely, fulfilling one of our Department's core missions since our founding in the wake of the September 11 attacks. The TSA workforce deserves to be fairly compensated at rates comparable with their peers on the General Schedule pay scale. The FY 2025 Budget includes an additional \$1.5 billion to continue the FY 2023 initiative to increase TSA pay levels, making TSA pay comparable to federal government employees in similar positions and enhancing recruitment and retention efforts.

The Budget resources TSA passenger volume growth expectations in FY 2025 to follow the historical growth rate of 4.5 percent averaged over the 2014-2019 period, which equates to an average 3.1 million daily passengers in 2025. Increased volume equates to greater risks to passenger safety. To mitigate this risk the President's Budget includes \$174 million to

adequately staff check points to meet the demands of the increased passenger volume while maintaining minimal wait times for passengers.

Conclusion

The Department was founded to confront a threat environment that has proven to be increasingly dynamic and diverse. The FY 2025 President's Budget builds on our successes to meet the ever-changing threat landscape we face and prepares the Department to meet the threats of tomorrow.

It is the privilege of my life to represent and serve alongside the DHS workforce – a workforce that has time and again demonstrated exceptional skill and steadfast commitment to keeping the Homeland safe and secure.

I am grateful to this Committee for your continued support and the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to working together and to answering your questions.