



**Written Statement for
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery
Committee on Homeland Security
United States House of Representatives**

Understanding the Importance of DHS Preparedness Grants:
Perspectives from the Field

**By Mr. Michael G. Masters
National Director and CEO, Secure Community Network
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About the Secure Community Network

The Secure Community Network (SCN), a nonprofit 501(c)(3), is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America. Founded in 2004 under the auspices of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, SCN works on behalf of 146 Federations, the 50 largest Jewish non-profit organizations in North America and over 300 independent communities as well as with other partners in the public, private, non-profit and academic sectors to ensure the safety, security and resiliency of the Jewish people.

SCN serves as the Jewish community's formal liaison with federal law enforcement and coordinates closely with federal, state and local law enforcement partners on safety and security issues related to the Jewish community; through the organization's Operations Center and Duty Desk, SCN analyzes intelligence and information, providing timely, credible threat and incident information to both law enforcement and community partners. SCN's team of law enforcement, homeland security, and military professionals proactively works with communities and partners across North America to develop and implement strategic frameworks that enhance the safety and security of the Jewish people. This includes developing best practice policies, emergency plans and procedures, undertaking threat and vulnerability assessments of facilities, providing critical, real-world training and exercises to prepare for threats and hazards, offering consultation on safety and security matters, and providing response as well as crisis management support during critical incidents.

SCN is dedicated to ensuring that Jewish organizations, communities, as well as life and culture can not only exist safely and securely, but flourish.

About Michael Masters

Michael G. Masters is the National Director & CEO of the Secure Community Network (SCN). Masters previously served as the Senior Vice President of The Soufan Group, a strategic international security consultancy firm and as the CEO of CivicScape, an advanced predictive analytics company.

Prior, Masters served as the Executive Director of the Department of Homeland Security and Emergency Management for Cook County, Illinois, as the Chief of Staff for the Chicago Police Department and as an assistant to former Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley.

Mr. Masters has served on numerous task forces for the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security and previously served on the Executive Board of the FBI's Chicago Joint Terrorism Task Force.

A Truman and a Gates Cambridge Trust Scholar, Masters received his B.A. from the University of Michigan, MPhil in International Relations from the University of Cambridge and his J.D. from Harvard Law School, where he served as managing editor for the Harvard International Law Journal.

Masters has held faculty appointments at both the John Marshall School of Law and at Northeastern University and serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Bernard Zell Anshe Emet Day School in Chicago, Illinois, on the Council of The Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, and as the President of The Soufan Center, a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing global security issues.

Masters received a commission in the United States Marine Corps, where he attained the rank of Captain. Certified as a peace officer and a Special Weapons and Tactics operator, Masters continues to serve his community as a part-time police officer.



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OVERVIEW

Chairman Payne, Ranking Member King, Distinguished Members of the Committee: America's Jewish community is under attack. Thank you for taking action to stop it.

I am Michael Masters, CEO and National Director of the Secure Community Network, or SCN. It is an honor to appear before you to participate in this hearing. To protect Jewish lives, we are counting on you – the members of this subcommittee – to support the funding desperately needed to prevent further assaults and to train people on what to do in case of an attack.

Without you, the faith-based community would be in even greater danger.

SCN is the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America. We work on behalf of The Jewish Federations of North America and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, covering over 50 national non-profit organizations,¹ 146 Jewish Federations, and over 300 independent Jewish communities,² all representing over approximately 90 percent of the Jewish community across North America.

We are the Jewish community's official liaison with federal law enforcement, particularly the FBI and DHS. Every day, we work to develop best-practice safety policies, undertake threat and vulnerability assessments, conduct life-saving training and exercises, and provide critical incident response.

We have worked with Jewish organizations in each and every one of your home states. We were in Jersey City after the attack and earlier this week provided training to the community in Monsey, New York.

I have personally served in several law enforcement and homeland security roles: a police officer trained in special weapons and tactics and a commissioned officer in the United States Marine

¹ "Member Organizations," Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.conferenceofpresidents.org/about/members>.

² "About The Jewish Federations of North America," The Jewish Federations of North America, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://jewishfederations.org/about-jfna>.

Corps, I previously served as the Chief of Staff of the Chicago Police Department and as the Executive Director of the Department of Homeland Security for Cook County, Illinois.

My job and that of my team is to secure our community so that the Jewish people can pray, celebrate, and gather in safety.

We are not volunteers, or private contractors. We are security professionals whose full-time job is to serve the Jewish community.

As a security expert and informed by my personal experience, I can state – without equivocation – that the NSGP has placed the non-profit, faith-based community in a better position to be safe and secure.

This means that more Americans – regardless of faith – can worship and gather in peace.

This is critical not just for the faith-based community but for the very preservation of religious freedom in this nation.

THREAT PICTURE

The threats facing the Jewish community are both complex and dynamic. At their core, they derive from an evil that is thousands of years old: anti-Semitism.

The Jewish community not only remains the number one target of religiously motivated hate crimes, but we have seen a rise in these events to near-historic levels, as well as increases in anti-Semitic incidents across the nation.³

We have seen a troubling rise in domestic extremism, with the FBI pursuing over 850 domestic terrorism investigations at last count.⁴

³ “Audit of Anti-Semitic Incidents: Year in Review 2018,” The Anti-Defamation League, accessed January 6, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/audit2018>.

⁴ Adam Goldman, “The FBI’s New Approach to Combating Domestic Terrorism: Straight Talk,” *The New York Times*, November 10, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/10/us/politics/domestic-terrorism-justice-department.html>.

In this environment, the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and National Counterterrorism Center have jointly assessed that domestic hate groups will continue to pose a lethal threat to religious and cultural facilities at home, especially mass casualty attacks at large gatherings and soft targets, and will be difficult to detect before they act.

Indeed, since the attack in Pittsburgh, law enforcement has disrupted over a dozen plots targeting the Jewish community, around the country.⁵

The attack two weeks ago in Monsey, New York, where the Jewish community gathered to celebrate Hanukkah, was the 13th incident in New York in three weeks.⁶

The Church shooting in Texas less than 18 hours later was the 14th deadly shooting at a house of worship in this country since June 2015.⁷

These events are horrific reminders of why this hearing is so important.

Moreover, we must protect these vital places...parts of who we are. We must work to ensure that they remain open and accessible while being safe and secure.

ADDRESSING THE THREATS

Sadly, safety and security has long had to be a focus for the Jewish community.

To address these threats, SCN was created to work with and on behalf of the Jewish community. Every day, we work to create an empowered resilient community.

In addition to the ongoing and committed support that we receive from law enforcement at all levels – with special recognition to the FBI and our public safety partners at DHS – and thanks to

⁵ Lesley Stahl, "Recovering from the Deadliest Anti-Semitic Attack in U.S. History," *CBS 60 Minutes*, October 20, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/tree-of-life-pittsburgh-synagogue-shooting-deadliest-anti-semitic-attack-in-u-s-history-60-minutes-2019-10-20/>.

⁶ Bobby Allyn and James Doubek, "Governor Cuomo Calls New York Hanukkah Attack 'Act of Domestic Terrorism'," *NPR*, December 29, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2019/12/29/792134545/5-stabbed-at-hanukkah-celebration-in-new-york>.

⁷ Frank Miles, "Texas Church Shooting is Latest of Many Attacks in US Houses of Worship in Recent Years," December 29, 2019, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/texas-church-shooting-attacks-houses-worship>.

the ongoing support from Congress and from the Administration for the NSGP as well as the intent behind it, we know that we do not face the challenges and threats directed at our community, alone.

IMPACT OF THE NON-PROFIT SECURITY GRANT PROGRAM (NSGP)

How and why is this funding critical?

Firstly, NSGP funding has made our community more safe and secure. It has placed electronic locks on exterior doors of Jewish community centers, cameras on synagogues and panic buttons in school classrooms.

In the Yom Kippur attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany, it was a simple door lock that kept dozens of worshippers – including a large group of Americans – safe.⁸

Each week, we work with communities and law enforcement around the country: dealing with suspicious individuals attempting to gain access to our facilities, vandals defacing our houses of worship with symbols of hate, bomb threats to our community centers.

In each of these cases, equipment similar to that which is made possible by the NSGP protects our community.

Second, NSGP funding is now protecting more communities in more places. Recent changes allow organizations in non-Urban Areas to take advantage of the program. From attacks in Overland Park, Kansas and Sutherland Springs to Monsey, New York and White Settlement, Texas, as the threat has changed, this has been an important expansion.

Third, NSGP funding provides training that saves lives. Through our Critical Infrastructure Program, SCN regularly provides security assessments to organizations. We often identify required physical security enhancements. That said, physical security solutions are only one part

⁸ Christopher F. Schuetze and Melissa Eddy, “Only a Locked Door Stopped a Massacre at a German Synagogue,” *The New York Times*, last updated October 21, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/10/world/europe/germany-synagogue-attack.html>.

of a security strategy. We know by experience, and have validating survivor testimony from both Pittsburgh and Poway, that training can save lives.

Today, NSGP funds can now be used to support planning, exercises and training for everyday citizens. For organizations that could not support such training prior, this can, literally, be the difference between life and death.

Fourth, every day, we are working to build relationships between our community and law enforcement. The NSGP is a component of this, fostering critical cooperation and engagement.

Lastly, and importantly, Chairman Payne and Ranking Member King, I am deeply appreciative of your efforts to increase funds for this program. Last year, with \$60 million available, we understand that there was close to \$170 million worth of requests. We are pleased that Congress increased the funding to \$90 million this year to help bridge this divide. At the same time, we intend to continue to work to make sure more organizations know about these funds, and how to effectively apply and use them. We encourage increases to the program to meet the need.

CLOSING

From attacks in Pittsburgh and Poway to Jersey City and Monsey, the Jewish way of life in the United States of America is under attack.

In each of these attacks, SCN's team was responding. What is required is a whole community response. An attack on any religious institution in this country – regardless of size, location or affiliation – is an attack on all of us.

No one in this country should ever question whether it is safe to walk into a religious institution, regardless of affiliation, location or size.

The NSGP and related efforts have assisted in reducing the threat, and providing peace of mind. But there is much more work to do...and we do not have time to lose.

Thank you for what you are doing. I am happy to take your questions.