



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Joint Hearing Statement of Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement & Intelligence Subcommittee Ranking Member Seth Magaziner (D-RI)

Protecting the Homeland: An Examination of Federal Efforts to Support State and Local Law Enforcement

May 16, 2023

To our law enforcement witnesses, thank you for your selfless service. Every day, you, and the men and women you serve alongside in uniform put your lives at risk to protect and serve this nation. This may be Police Week, but we honor your service every day, we are grateful for the sacrifices you and your families make, and we particularly honor those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice and have died in the line of duty.

I speak for all of the Democrats on our subcommittees when I express my gratitude to you, and our commitment to supporting the funding, the staffing, and the technology you need to do your jobs safely and effectively. We also want to highlight the importance of strong relationships between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve. Community policing models based upon respect and collaboration between law enforcement and civilians have consistently been shown to be effective in reducing crime and improving safety for both officers and civilians.

Police officers are often the first responders on the scene of overdoses, and we must ensure that officers have the support and training to respond effectively in the midst of this epidemic. And in order for us to reduce crime and make police work safer for those who put on the uniform, we must continue to fight for common sense gun safety laws so that neighborhoods are safe from gun violence and police officers are never outgunned.

From 2012 to 2021, 504 police officers were killed in the United States. Out of those, 456 officers were fatally shot with a gun—meaning that 90 percent of line of duty deaths were perpetrated with a gun. This gun violence epidemic has only become worse in recent years. From 2020 to 2021, the number of police officers fatally shot rose 35 percent – and it should be no surprise that these increasing occurrences of preventable officer deaths are three times more likely to occur in places with weak gun laws. States like mine that have passed common sense gun safety laws like background checks, red flag laws, and ghost gun and high-capacity magazine bans, generally see lower levels of gun violence and officers killed on duty than states with weaker gun safety laws.

Another factor in preventing violence is strong collaboration and information sharing between federal and local law enforcement agencies. This is particularly important in preventing acts of terrorism, a key focus of our subcommittee. We must build on the strength of the fusion center model and ensure that collaboration between state and local law enforcement in anticipating and neutralizing terror threats, both foreign and domestic, is as seamless as possible. Information sharing between federal and local agencies is vital in neutralizing terror threats and preventing mass casualty events.

I find it disturbing that some of our colleagues on the far right have taken to calling for federal law enforcement agencies like the FBI and ATF to be defunded. I know they do not speak for all in their party, and they certainly do not speak for all Americans. But this rhetoric is dangerous for many reasons, including the fact that these agencies play a vital role in supporting local law enforcement in preventing and responding to terror events.

My hope is that this hearing will provide insight to us as legislators, and best practices for those watching around the country, as we work together in our shared goal to improve the safety of our Homeland and all of its citizens. In addition to having an earnest conversation about common sense gun laws, I hope to hear from today's witnesses about other ways the federal government can support your efforts to keep our communities safe, including through improved information sharing.

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