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TESTIMONY  
OF  
ALEJANDRO N. MAYORKAS  
SECRETARY  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
REGARDING A HEARING ON  
“A Review of the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”  
BEFORE THE  
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

June 17, 2021  
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Thompson, Ranking Member Katko, and distinguished Members of the Committee:

It is a privilege to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Budget.

On a daily basis, the more than 240,000 men and women of DHS respond to our Nation's most serious threats. DHS employees rise to every challenge, and the challenges are many. DHS is aggressively pursuing the Administration's priorities and addressing some of the most critical and evolving threats to the United States. We are focusing on defeating the COVID-19 pandemic, advancing technology for border security while promoting a humane and efficient immigration system, combatting Domestic Violent Extremism, and detecting, mitigating, recovering from, and responding to malicious cyber-attacks. I would like to highlight the work we have undertaken so far at DHS under the Biden-Harris Administration, as well as the priorities included in the FY 2022 President's Budget.

### **Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

COVID-19 has impacted every facet of American life, and DHS has been integral to the effort to successfully and equitably distribute COVID-19 vaccinations across the country. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) helped vaccinate more than 5 million people at our community vaccination sites and remains committed to assisting government and nonprofit partners to help defeat this deadly pandemic. FEMA helped stand up over 1,000 federally supported community vaccination centers. FEMA has provided more than \$4.6 billion in support of vaccinations across the country.

As Secretary, I have no greater obligation than that of ensuring the health and safety of our workforce, 80 percent of whom are front-line employees. Five days into the Biden-Harris Administration, DHS launched Operation Vaccinate Our Workforce (VOW) to accelerate the administration of COVID-19 vaccines on a voluntary basis to frontline DHS employees. On the first day of the Biden-Harris Administration, less than two percent of our front-line workers who elected to receive the vaccine had been vaccinated. Today, that share has grown to more than 77 percent. Prioritizing the health and safety needs of the DHS workforce has enabled us to fulfill our mission even in a constrained COVID-19 environment. Operation VOW partnered with the Veterans Health Administration, a world-class healthcare system, to get COVID-19 vaccines into the arms of our front-line personnel.

Our public health and medical professionals from the Chief Medical Officer's staff participated in the whole-of-government approach to combat the pandemic by serving on the Federal Healthcare Resilience Task Force, the Medical Countermeasures Task Force, and deploying as part of a tactical medical assistance team. These efforts resulted in life-saving Personal Protective Equipment preservation best practices; the accelerated development, manufacture, and availability of COVID-19 medical countermeasures; and the implementation of novel clinical and operational interventions that saved lives in diverse communities across the Nation.

### **Addressing the Challenges at the Border**

Since April 2020, the number of encounters at the border has been elevated due to ongoing

violence, natural disasters, food insecurity, and poverty in the Northern Triangle countries of Central America. This resulted in a substantial strain on the processing, transportation, and holding capacity of the U.S. Border Patrol. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the recommended temporary holding capacity within all Border Patrol facilities had also been reduced by up to 75 percent to allow for increased physical distancing and to reduce the further spread of the disease. Compounding this challenge is the fact that the previous administration dismantled our Nation's immigration system, terminated the Central American Minors program, and cut hundreds of millions of dollars in foreign aid to the Northern Triangle countries of Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras. As a result, the recent surge in unaccompanied children presented a serious challenge for DHS and our colleagues at the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). We have made significant progress on this front.

On March 13, I directed FEMA to support a government-wide effort to safely receive, shelter, and transfer unaccompanied children to HHS care and custody, and onward to a verified sponsor. FEMA immediately integrated and co-located with HHS to look at every available option to support a quick expansion of HHS' physical capacity for the care and custody of unaccompanied children, and to support HHS in managing overall operations. FEMA has deployed more than 100 employees to help HHS identify locations for emergency shelters, oversee construction, and manage operations.

Additionally, U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has trained and deployed more than 350 of its personnel to virtually interview unaccompanied children and potential sponsors, in order to provide case management for unaccompanied children in HHS custody at Emergency Intake Sites (EIS). As of June 14, 2021, USCIS personnel have conducted approximately 10,000 interviews and recommended more than 7,000 children for release to a sponsor. U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) also constructed additional soft-sided facilities and stood up the interagency Movement Coordination Cell to bring together colleagues from FEMA, HHS, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and CBP to share a common operating picture. More than 700 additional DHS volunteers stepped up to help through the DHS Volunteer Force.

Between March 13 and May 1, FEMA assisted in the activation of 14 HHS EIS facilities. EIS facilities are operating in Texas, California, and Michigan, increasing the potential temporary bed capacity when fully staffed by 19,987 beds, or 1,999 percent.

This additional bed capacity, along with improvements in the process of safely releasing unaccompanied children to sponsors, has resulted in a massive reduction in the number of unaccompanied children in CBP custody—from 5,767 at its peak on March 29 to 685 on June 11. During this same period, the number of unaccompanied children who have been in custody longer than 72 hours has decreased from 4,078 at its peak on March 29 to two on the morning of June 11, while average time in custody for unaccompanied children has fallen from 133 hours on March 29 to 23 hours on the morning of June 11. This progress was made, moreover, while CBP encountered 18,000 unaccompanied children in the month of April. For the seven-day period ending on June 10, CBP transferred an average of 392 unaccompanied children per day to HHS' Office of Refugee Resettlement, approximately 60 percent of CBP's total unaccompanied child population on a given day, and keeping pace with daily encounters.

On January 20, DHS announced it would suspend all new enrollments in the Migrant Protection Protocols (MPP) program. Under MPP, approximately 70,000 individuals were forced to return to Mexico while awaiting their immigration proceedings. On June 1, 2021, as directed by the President in Executive Order 14010, I completed my review of MPP and terminated the program. As part of the Administration's phased approach to restore safe and orderly processing at the Southwest Border, DHS began processing into the United States certain individuals who were enrolled in MPP to allow them to pursue their legal claims before the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Executive Office for Immigration Review. The Department worked closely with interagency and international organization partners as well as the Government of Mexico. This innovative and efficient process to address certain individuals who were enrolled in MPP is a testament to our ability to process individuals into the United States in a way that is humane and efficient while still enforcing our immigration laws and maintaining border security and public health.

### **Stopping the Threat of Domestic Violent Extremism**

As threats against the Nation evolve, it is critical that the Department adapts quickly and efficiently when necessary to meet any threat against the people of the United States. Domestic Violent Extremism (DVE) is typically fueled by false narratives, conspiracy theories, and extremist rhetoric spread through social media and other online platforms. The lethality of this threat is all too real, as witnessed during the attack on the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, and recent attacks across the United States, including against government buildings, personnel, and minority groups. DHS is prioritizing addressing this threat while improving the quality of our intelligence gathering and analysis, information sharing, and DVE detection, prevention, and response efforts.

Combatting this violence requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, which I have already initiated at DHS in collaboration with key partners, including the DOJ, to help ensure the violence and assault on democracy that occurred on January 6<sup>th</sup> does not occur again. DHS has established a new, dedicated domestic terrorism branch within the Department's Office of Intelligence and Analysis, and recently established a new Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships, replacing the Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention. Further, DHS is increasing training opportunities for law enforcement partners, including through threat assessment and management programs related to DVE. DHS has also undertaken an internal review of the potential threat of DVE within the Department.

In February, I designated, for the first time, combatting DVE as a "National Priority Area" for the FY 2021 State Homeland Security Program and Urban Area Security Initiative grant program. As a result, state, local, tribal, and territorial governments are required to spend 7.5 percent of their DHS grant awards combating this threat. On March 24, the Department made \$20 million available through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant Program to help communities across our country develop innovative capabilities to combat terrorism and targeted violence.

## **Bolstering Cybersecurity and Resilience**

Our Nation faces constant cyber threats from nation states and criminal groups alike. Last month, the United States suffered a significant ransomware attack against its critical pipeline infrastructure. Over the past months, we discovered several intrusion campaigns impacting the federal government and critical infrastructure. As the Nation's lead agency for protecting the federal civilian government and critical infrastructure against cybersecurity threats, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) serves a central role by enabling greater visibility into cybersecurity threats, strengthening incident response capabilities, and driving improvements in security practices. Congress recently empowered and further strengthened CISA through several provisions in the FY 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and funding in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 that the Department is now focused on implementing.

On May 12, President Biden issued an Executive Order to protect federal government networks and to bolster our Nation's cybersecurity. This Order will empower DHS and our interagency partners to modernize federal cybersecurity, expand information sharing, and dramatically improve our ability to prevent, detect, assess, and remediate cyber incidents across the federal government. We are actively working to implement the Executive Order to help agencies improve their security posture, develop a standard playbook for incident response, and establish a Cyber Safety Review Board comprised of public and private sector stakeholders.

In addition to the NDAA and the Executive Order, I announced a series of 60-day "sprints" to mobilize action across the Department focusing on specific priority areas. The first sprint was dedicated to elevating the fight against ransomware, a particularly egregious type of malicious cyber activity. The second is dedicated to building a more robust and diverse workforce at the Department and beyond, including a DHS cybersecurity hiring sprint during the 60-day sprint and the development and launch of several other workforce-focused initiatives. Subsequent sprints will focus on better protecting industrial control systems, strengthening cybersecurity in the context of our transportation systems, and safeguarding the integrity of our election infrastructure.

## **Funding Priorities for FY 2022**

The FY 2022 President's Budget provides \$1.2 billion for effective and modern port and border security, which includes \$655 million for modernization of land ports of entry (POE); investments in modern border security technology and assets; and investments in modern facility design and construction. The Budget includes no additional funding for border wall construction, and requests that Congress cancel remaining border wall construction balances upon passage of an FY 2022 appropriations act. To expand our detection capabilities, CBP Air and Marine Operations seeks enhancements to aircraft sensors and additional aircraft acquisitions critical to surveillance along the Southwest Border. The FY 2022 President's Budget includes \$28 million for the first land interdiction configuration of the Multi-role Enforcement Aircraft, which integrates with the \$9 million request for the U.S. Border Patrol small Unmanned Aircraft System program. The integration of these border security technologies will provide a common operating picture for law enforcement. At the POEs, CBP Officers continue to optimize Non-

Intrusive Inspection technology, seeing through barriers, and detecting concealed contraband. A \$47 million investment builds on their continued integration and deployment along our borders, while maintenance and system support ensure reliability on the front lines.

The FY 2022 President's Budget also supports the promise of a fair and equitable immigration system that both enforces our immigration laws and reflects the Nation's values. The Budget includes a 50 percent increase for case management services within the ICE Alternatives to Detention program. This funding is intended to ensure non-citizens are made aware of their legal obligations and it promotes a more transparent immigration system. In addition, this proposal reflects a new discretionary request of \$345 million for additional staff, equipment, and support services to administer the Nation's legal immigration system. These enhancements will provide resources to reduce application and petition backlogs and allow USCIS to interview enough refugees to admit up to 125,000 annually. Additionally, to ensure the safe and humane treatment of migrants at the Southwest Border, the request includes \$163 million for medical services for those in CBP custody. This funding covers intake health interviews, medical assessments, onsite diagnosis and treatment of basic medical conditions, and comprehensive follow-up and monitoring in austere conditions.

The FY 2022 President's Budget continues ongoing investments in CISA to address critical and pressing cyber, physical infrastructure, and emergency communications security issues. Accordingly, \$2.1 billion is requested for cyber activities including \$408 million for the National Cybersecurity Protection System and \$325 million for the Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation program. This request builds on the \$650 million already provided to CISA in the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 to respond to the recent Government-wide cyber breaches and boost U.S. cyber defenses. It will also allow CISA to enhance its cybersecurity tools, hire highly qualified experts, and obtain support services to protect and defend Federal and critical infrastructure information technology systems.

In a constantly evolving security environment, the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) continues to leverage emerging technology and enhanced screening. In FY 2022, TSA will invest \$127 million in the Secure Flight program, a risk-based, intelligence-driven watch-list program to identify potential threats. To balance the need for increased security without restricting freedom of movement for legitimate travelers, the FY 2022 President's Budget includes \$104 million to expand TSA's Computed Tomography (CT) screening capability. CT screening is the most impactful property-screening tool available today, leveraging 3D imagery and detection against non-conventional concealment methods, while eliminating the need for passengers to remove electronic items from carry-on bags. Recognizing long-term strategic goals, TSA also seeks to invest in their essential personnel through a Transportation Security Officer service-pay strategy, as well as the critical infrastructure supporting the more than 55,000+ personnel of TSA.

The FY 2022 President's Budget reflects FEMA's continued intent to execute its mission while managing resources efficiently and effectively. This includes coordinating response and recovery missions and maintaining a highly regarded and well-trained cadre of employees ready to respond to ongoing and future disasters. The Budget invests \$532 million above the FY 2021 enacted level to confront climate change, including significant investments in pre-disaster

planning and resilience efforts, climate resilience grant programs, and investments into FEMA's incident management workforce. FEMA programs include a resilient infrastructure and communities grant program, which prioritizes climate resilience projects in vulnerable and historically underserved communities. FEMA has projected \$18.8 billion for the Disaster Relief Fund, providing immediate assistance to families and communities affected by disasters to rebuild and recover. In addition to advancing long-term strategies via this request, FEMA remains focused on the ongoing COVID-19 response and will continue working with partners to defeat this deadly pandemic.

The U.S. Coast Guard is in the midst of the largest recapitalization effort in its history, an effort critical to building the Coast Guard our Nation needs to meet increasingly complex national security threats and to advance America's economic prosperity. In FY 2022, the Coast Guard seeks to continue its momentum in this effort, with \$170 million for Long Lead Time Materials for Polar Security Cutter #3, as well as \$597 million supporting the construction of Offshore Patrol Cutter construction. The FY 2022 President's Budget also adds \$116 million for sustainment and crewing of new cutters, boats, and aircraft, as well as \$194 million to address maintenance backlogs on Coast Guard surface and aviation assets.

The men and women of the U.S. Secret Service protect our Nation's highest elected and appointed leaders, visiting foreign heads of state, facilities, and major events. The FY 2022 President's Budget includes \$2.6 billion to support the Secret Service's critical missions, ranging from continued investment in Fully Armored Vehicles to empowering state and local law enforcement through partnership with the National Computer Forensics Institute.

I have outlined above some of the many operational successes and challenges throughout the Department and the fiscal priorities included in the FY 2022 President's Budget for DHS. The strategic investments that each DHS Component initiates directly impact the readiness, preparedness, flexibility, and success of the Department in its mission to secure the homeland.

I am honored to support and represent the dedicated DHS workforce. Their commitment to the dynamic homeland security mission is unwavering, and I vow to do everything in my authority as Secretary to ensure they are resourced, compensated, and recognized appropriately. Therefore, I ask for your continued support in providing the resources we need to meet our mission.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to discuss the Department's FY 2022 President's Budget submission. I welcome any questions you have at this time.