



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

August 8, 2019

The Honorable Kevin K. McAleenan  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Acting Secretary McAleenan:

As the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, we write in the wake of several recent acts of mass violence.

On August 3, 2019, a gunman opened fire at a Walmart killing 22 people and injuring 24 others in El Paso, Texas.<sup>1</sup> On August 4, 2019, a gunman killed nine and injured at least 24 others within 30 seconds in Dayton, Ohio.<sup>2</sup> These incidents come on the heels of a string of recent acts of violence being treated as domestic terrorism. On July 28, 2019, a gunman opened fire at a food festival in Gilroy, California, killing three and injuring more than a dozen others.<sup>3</sup> On April 27, 2019, a gunman killed one person and injured three others in a synagogue in Poway, California.<sup>4</sup>

These acts of mass violence remind us once again of the serious threat our nation faces from domestic terrorists. In recent testimony, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray stated that the FBI had made more domestic terrorism arrests in the first three quarters of Fiscal Year (FY) 2019 than all of FY 2018 combined.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Director Wray informed Congress that the number of domestic terrorism arrests equals those connected to

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Hutchinson, Aaron Katersky, Josh Margolin, *Alleged shooter cased El Paso Walmart before rampage that killed 22: Law enforcement officials*, ABC NEWS, August 5, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/death-toll-rises-22-el-paso-shooting-victims/story?id=64780680>.

<sup>2</sup> Mitch Smith, Rick Rojas, Campbell Robertson, *Dayton Gunman Had Been Exploring 'Violent Ideologies,' F.B.I. Says*, NEW YORK TIMES, August 6, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/06/us/mass-shootings.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Eric Levenson, *Gilroy festival shooter had a 'target list' with religious and political groups*, CNN, August 6, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/06/us/gilroy-festival-shooting/index.html>.

<sup>4</sup> *Terrorism in America After 9/11*, NEW AMERICA, <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/what-threat-united-states-today/>.

<sup>5</sup> Matt Zapotosky, *Wray says FBI has recorded about 100 domestic terrorism arrests in fiscal 2019 and many investigations involve white supremacy*, NEW YORK TIMES, July 23, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/wray-says-fbi-has-recorded-about-100-domestic-terrorism-arrests-in-fiscal-2019-and-most-investigations-involve-white-supremacy/2019/07/23/600d49a6-aca1-11e9-bc5c-e73b603e7f38\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/wray-says-fbi-has-recorded-about-100-domestic-terrorism-arrests-in-fiscal-2019-and-most-investigations-involve-white-supremacy/2019/07/23/600d49a6-aca1-11e9-bc5c-e73b603e7f38_story.html).

international terrorism.<sup>6</sup> The FBI's response to these recent acts of violence includes opening domestic terrorism investigations. For its part, the National Counterterrorism Center, which has traditionally focused on intelligence "pertaining to terrorism and [counterterrorism] except intelligence pertaining exclusively to domestic terrorism,"<sup>7</sup> is reportedly utilizing its resources to assist the Federal efforts to combat domestic terrorism.<sup>8</sup>

As you know, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was established to champion resilience, reduce threats to the homeland, and promote engagement between the public and private partners. As we approach the 18<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the September 11<sup>th</sup> terrorist attacks, this mission is more critical than ever.

On Tuesday, August 6<sup>th</sup>, you acknowledged that the Department needs to do more to address domestic terrorism.<sup>9</sup> We are committed to ensuring DHS has the resources necessary to do so but would like to have a better understanding of how the Department is utilizing its existing tools and authorities to respond to attacks like the ones we have seen in recent days. With that in mind, since April 27, 2019--

- Has a DHS Counterterrorism Advisory Board (CTAB) been established to bring together the intelligence, operational and policy-making elements from across DHS to facilitate a cohesive and coordinated operational response so that DHS can deter and disrupt terrorist attacks in coordination with the FBI and other partners?
- Have Community Awareness Briefings (CAB) or Community Resilience Exercises (CREX) been scheduled, including for any of the impacted communities, to help communities and law enforcement develop understanding of violent extremist recruitment tactics and explore ways to collectively prevent and address such public safety threats at the local level?
- Has the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties established Incident Community Coordination Teams to establish rapid two-way communications between the Federal government and impacted communities? If so, when and for which communities, and what specifically has the Incident Community Coordination Team done?
- Are you contemplating any updates to the National Terrorism Advisory System (NTAS) to better communicate information about terrorist threats to the American public?
- Has the Office of Intelligence and Analysis created new intelligence products for State, local, Tribal and Territorial law enforcement, in light of the recent attacks?

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> NCTC, OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE, n.d., <https://www.dni.gov/index.php/nctc-home>.

<sup>8</sup> Betsy Woodruff, *Post-9/11 Intel Center Now Going After Domestic Terror*, DAILY BEAST, August 7, 2019, <https://www.thedailybeast.com/national-counterterrorism-center-set-up-after-911-now-going-after-domestic-terrorism>.

<sup>9</sup> Emily Tillett, *Homeland Security chief calls for more resources to fight domestic terrorism after report highlights shift in funding*, CBS NEWS, August 6, 2019, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/el-paso-shooting-homeland-security-kevin-mcaleenan-resources-domestic-terrorism-report-highlights-funding/>

- Has DHS placed new information on the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN) to be shared with Federal, State, Tribal, Territorial, and local law enforcement?
- Did DHS host calls with field personnel over the past weekend or subsequently with fusion centers? If so, when and who was included?
- Is DHS aware of any additional outreach state and regional fusion centers near the affected communities engaged in?

The Committee on Homeland Security stands ready to work with you to address the threat of domestic terrorism in America. We look forward to hearing from you on these issues at the Committee's hearing on worldwide threats in September.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON  
Chairman



MIKE ROGERS  
Ranking Member