

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER JACKIE SPEIER (D-CA)

Hearing:

“The United States Secret Service: Examining Protective and Investigative Missions and Challenges in 2012”

Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

September 14, 2011 at 2:00 PM

I would like to welcome Director Sullivan and thank him for appearing before us today, and I look forward to gaining insight into the important work the Secret Service carries out every day.

This is a critical time for the Secret Service, as the campaign season for the 2012 Presidential election is heating up.

In the last Presidential election, then-candidate Barack Obama reportedly received a record number of threats, requiring him to get Secret Service protection earlier in the campaign cycle than any candidate in history.

We now face a diverse array of threats from terrorist groups, lone wolves, deranged individuals and others we may not even know of yet. We learned that dramatically last January when our dear friend and colleague Gabby Giffords was shot and 6 people were killed in Tuscon, Arizona.

In what is sure to be an eventful election year, does the Secret Service have all the resources and support it needs to protect the candidates amidst a constrained budget environment?

Although the Secret Service has done an excellent job keeping our candidates safe in past elections, it has had trouble managing its budget.

The DHS Inspector General recently released a report finding that the Secret Service violated the Anti-Deficiency Act when the CFO failed to notify DHS and the Congress that the Service overspent its appropriated funds during the hectic 2008 campaign.

In the run-up to the 2012 campaign, I am interested to hear about what changes have been made and controls put in place to prevent this from happening again.

The Secret Service’s mandate goes beyond just protecting the President and candidates; they also have responsibility for protecting other government officials, foreign dignitaries, and the security for designated National Special Security Events (NSSEs).

Providing protection for the UN General Assembly—which began just yesterday and sits in the heart of Manhattan, falls to the Secret Service.

We were reminded by events over the past week, with the sobering news of a “credible” threat surrounding the 9/11 tenth anniversary, that these events of special significance also face threats from acts of terror.

In addition, there are many events over the next year that the Secret Service must prepare for – including the APEC Summit, the G20 Summit, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, and more.

It is critical that all of the Secret Service's protective activities are conducted with the appropriate planning, resources and oversight.

The Secret Service has a vital mission – but it has faced significant criticism in the past.

The Secret Service has come under fire from many, including the Ranking Member of the Full Committee, who point out the Service's poor history of promoting a diverse workforce, and for several discriminatory practices it has been accused of in the past several years.

And of course, the last time Director Sullivan testified before the Committee – before my time on the panel – it was to answer for the much-publicized White House security breaches.

I am looking forward to finding out if these issues have been addressed once and for all.

I am also eager to learn more about the Secret Service's other important mission – to investigate crimes against our financial institutions and maintain the security of our economy.

At first, this meant the Secret Service had to protect our currency from counterfeiters.

But the way we conduct business – from personal payments to transactions between large institutions – has drastically changed in the internet era, and our economic security is threatened by a diverse array of criminal activity, from counterfeiting to credit card fraud to hacking.

Does the Secret Service have the expertise and resources it needs to keep up with the times and be an effective crime-fighter in this dynamic environment?

The Secret Service is absolutely vital to our nation's security and prosperity, and I commend the men and women of the Secret Service for carrying out their work with diligence.

Once again I want to welcome Director Sullivan here today, and I look forward to working with the Secret Service to ensure they have all the necessary resources required to carry out their important dual missions.