



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

March 11, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
301 7th Street SW – Mail Stop 0020
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

We are writing to learn more about the Department of Homeland Security's ("Department") efforts to maintain situational awareness and response capabilities related to the ongoing presidential campaign events. Within the last year, there have been more than a dozen incidents of violence, arrests, and forcible removals from presidential campaign events. These incidents have a direct impact on public safety. In fact, some incidents have occurred in proximity to the presidential candidates, three of whom are protectees of the United States Secret Service.

As the principal Federal officer for domestic incident management, you are responsible for coordinating Federal operations within the United States. In furtherance of this responsibility, the Department's National Operations Center (NOC) monitors and reports on all threat and hazard incidents with a relevant nexus to an identified national or homeland security threat, which includes incidents of law enforcement encounters and special events. The Department has outlined the criteria the NOC uses to screen incoming incident information to determine if the incident triggers Critical Information Requirements (CIRs). Among that criteria, CIRs are triggered when a 1) a major event involving public safety expected to result in national media attention or 2) an incident, event, or threat which has the potential for escalation, or which will require resources in excess of the responding agency's capability.

In August 2015, Ranking Member Thompson expressed his concerns with the Department's monitoring of peaceful protests, awareness activities, and cultural events related to the Black Lives Matter movement.¹ In response, you stated that the Department is "responsible for monitoring and responding to all threats and hazards impacting the

¹ Letter from Ranking Member Bennie Thompson, House Committee on Homeland Security, to Secretary Jeh Johnson, Department of Homeland Security (Aug. 13, 2015) (on file with the House Committee on Homeland Security).

homeland” within its existing authorities.² You stated, “the Department maintains situational awareness of events and activities which may impact the safety, security, and resilience of the Nation or the Federal Government’s operations, personnel, or facilities.”³ You further elaborated that situational awareness of these events allow for a more efficient and coordinated response should there be an incident and in some cases the Department may play a significant role in providing direct support to local security efforts.

Although campaign rallies provide participants with the Constitutionally guaranteed opportunity to support their candidate of choice, they have also become havens for charged rhetoric, which has incited violence. Given that the current presidential candidates include a former Secretary of State, three United States Senators, a Governor, and a businessman, and at times, presidential campaign rallies attract over 100,000 people, public safety should be of utmost concern. Recognizing the sheer magnitude of some rallies, the potential for violent activity at certain events, and the stature of the presidential candidates, it is imperative that the Department maintains situational awareness and provides its state and local partners with the necessary support. Therefore, pursuant to Rule (X)(3)(g) and Rule (XI) of the House of Representatives, please respond to the following by March 25, 2016:

1. Please identify the Department components involved in providing operational and support functions surrounding presidential campaign events and protests since July 1, 2015;
2. Based on the methodology by which the Department determines which events to monitor provided in your letter dated September 23, 2015, please provide a list of all presidential campaign related events and protests that DHS has monitored and/or provided operational support from July 1, 2015 to present;
3. Please provide a description of how the Department uses and/or disseminates the information collected from monitoring presidential campaign related activities;
4. Please provide the federal, state and local agencies that the Department provided information collected from monitoring the campaign related events and protests.
5. Please provide any feedback the Department has received in response to providing the information collected from monitoring the campaign events and protests.

² Letter from Secretary Jeh Johnson, Department of Homeland Security, to Ranking Member Bennie Thompson, House Committee on Homeland Security, (Sept. 23, 2015) (on file with the House Committee on Homeland Security).

³ Letter from Secretary Jeh Johnson, Department of Homeland Security, to Ranking Member Bennie Thompson, House Committee on Homeland Security, (Sept. 23, 2015) (on file with the House Committee on Homeland Security).

6. Please provide the federal, state and local agencies the Department provided operational support and or situational awareness surrounding presidential campaign related events and protests.

Thank you for your timely attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Management Efficiency