

**Statement of M. Tia Johnson
Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs
Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives**

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cummings, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the considerable efforts, time, resources and money that the Department of Homeland Security devotes to complying with oversight requests by this Committee, and by the United States Congress generally. During his confirmation hearing, Secretary Johnson pledged transparency and candor with Congress, and committed to respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely fashion. Since his arrival in December 2013, the Department's responsiveness to oversight requests has greatly improved. Indeed, last year, the Department examined its responses to Congressional inquiries and found that the Secretary's Office had cut response time in half since 2013. We therefore appreciated Chairman Chaffetz's statement, when he recognized that the production and response to Congress had become much better, and thanked the Secretary and those of us who worked for him for our efforts in that area. We are determined to continue to improve on that record.

As you may know, prior to coming to DHS, I served as an officer in the U.S. Army for almost thirty years. As a senior colonel, I was assigned to the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Legislative Affairs. At the time, we were still involved in combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. These two operations, as well as the detainee mission, generated a significant amount of Congressional oversight. I was involved in that oversight process, which, at the time, I thought was considerable. However, upon my arrival at DHS, I was surprised to learn of the depth, breadth, and quantity of Congressional oversight that this Department faces.

As you may recall, in 2004 the 9/11 Commission strongly recommended that Congress reform the Congressional oversight structure for DHS. As one expert witness told the Commission, the number of Congressional bodies that exercise oversight over DHS is "perhaps the single largest obstacle impeding the department's successful development." With jurisdiction over both Oversight and Government Reform, your Committee is uniquely positioned to help foster efforts to implement this crucial 9/11 Commission recommendation.

Unfortunately, in the twelve years since the Commission issued that recommendation, oversight of the Department has grown only more complex and extensive. At last count, the Department answered to 92 Congressional committees and subcommittees, and 27 other caucuses, commissions and groups. As the 9/11 Commission Chairman, former Republican Governor Tom Kean, has said "Think of having a hundred bosses. Think of reporting to a hundred people. It makes no sense. You could not do your job under those circumstances."

Despite these challenges, we *are* doing our job. During calendar year 2015, DHS received approximately 700 oversight letters and countless more oversight requests. Of those, 70 letters came from Members of this Committee. We have responded to oversight inquiries on a broad array of topics ranging from the Secret Service's protective mission to DHS's assistance to victims of cyber breaches to the President's executive actions on immigration reform. By our estimate, in 2015 DHS devoted more than 100,000 hours to responding to Congressional oversight.

The invitation letter to today's hearing stated that the Committee wishes to specifically address the Department's responses to oversight requests and demands regarding the United States Secret Service. With regard to these, during Calendar Year 2015, DHS and the Secret Service received 12 letters, over 100 requests for information, testimony or documents, and one subpoena from this Committee. By our count, we have completed addressing over 90 of those requests. Secret Service staff have provided 13 briefings to Committee staff, and Secret Service leadership has testified at two Committee hearings. Eight employees of the Secret Service took time out from their duties to participate in day-long transcribed interviews conducted by the Committee's staff. And, at the Chairman's request, we facilitated a visit to the Secret Service headquarters for Members of this Committee. In total, the Department has produced over 10,000 pages of documents in response to the Committee's requests in this area, and, additionally, thousands of pages of classified documents were produced in the appropriate setting.

These efforts have supplemented our hard work to respond to inquiries about the operations of the Secret Service from the independent Protective Mission Panel, various investigations by the Office of the Inspector General, and the oversight inquiries of ten other Congressional committees and subcommittees.

Mr. Chairman, Secretary Johnson has made responsiveness to Congress a priority and we are determined to continue to improve on our past record of oversight response. It is my hope that 2016 will prove to be even better than 2015 in that regard.

I would be pleased to answer any questions you or the Members of the Committee may have.