



TESTIMONY OF

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BEFORE

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Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on National Security

ON

“Empowering Women and Girls and Promoting International Security”

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Chairman Lynch, Ranking Member Grothman, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS or the Department) Implementation Plan required under the United States Strategy on Women, Peace, and Security (WPS Strategy) of June 2019 in response to the Women, Peace, and Security Act of 2017 (the Act or WPS Act), which President Donald J. Trump signed into law on October 6, 2017, after strong bipartisan passage of the Act.

As the nation's largest law enforcement and security agency, DHS knows firsthand the value that women bring to all aspects of the Department's missions. DHS works systematically to advance the inclusion of women, as well as other underrepresented populations, in its workforce, highlights of which are noted in both the Department's annual Management Directive 715 (MD-715) reports to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the annual report for the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), as well as in the various Components' annual reports. CRCL, in conjunction with the Office of the Chief Human Capital Officer, focuses diversity programs on identifying and removing barriers for women, and others, to ensure they have a seat at the table in DHS activities.

Moreover, the Department's extensive contacts with foreign partners, at both the executive and operational levels, and our longstanding work with the Department of State (State) to provide training and exchange opportunities, positions DHS to help advance the goals of the WPS Act.

At the end of summer 2019, following issuance of the WPS Strategy, I was asked to lead the Department's efforts on WPS, and DHS began participating in interagency efforts and drafting its Implementation Plan. The Department, along with its counterparts at the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), coordinated official release of the four WPS Implementation Plans in June 2020.

State, USAID, and DOD have spent more than ten years supporting efforts globally, using both funding opportunities and soft diplomacy to accelerate, institutionalize, and better coordinate U.S. efforts to advance women's inclusion in peace negotiations, peacebuilding activities, and conflict prevention; to protect women from sexual violence; and to ensure equal access to relief and recovery assistance in areas of conflict and insecurity. DHS, in contrast, is new to this effort.

While its efforts to promote WPS are just starting, DHS recognizes that its engagement in WPS helps the Department to achieve its goal: "to safeguard the American people, our homeland and our values." As Acting DHS Secretary Chad Wolf noted in his foreword to the Department's first Implementation Plan:

"There are critical links between women's empowerment and global peace and security

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Terrorists, transnational criminal organizations and other bad actors congregate in areas of conflict and spur population displacement and migration, including to the United States. In this sense, protecting our homeland means globally protecting women's equality, opportunity, and empowerment."

Since January, the Department's focus has been to identify baseline efforts already underway. We are in the process of identifying a group of Executive and Senior level officials, as well as Subject Matter Experts, across the Operational Components and Headquarters Offices who can help CRCL identify DHS activities that potentially align with WPS goals. Identifying current activities that potentially align with WPS goals will likely allow us to identify reportable, current WPS activity, as well as identify areas of opportunity for future, improved WPS activity at DHS.

Since the Department primarily operates domestically, we have not previously been institutionally involved with WPS and related executive branch activities, such as the National Action Plan. DHS is, however, involved in a number of activities domestically and/or internationally that look promising for institutionalizing WPS engagement at the Department. It is clear DHS has a real opportunity to influence, in a focused way, international efforts to improve women's inclusion in foreign security partners' activities.

The Department has to date identified several activities that have some impact on WPS, including:

- Sponsored training for foreign partners at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers' (FLETC) facilities;
- Providing trainers to support the State Department-operated International Law Enforcement Academies; and
- Liaison officer exchanges and familiarization visits.

While some women from partner nations have already taken advantage of DHS-provided training activities, including a week-long training in Leadership for Women in Law Enforcement, the extent of women's participation has never previously been tracked. The WPS Act brings a welcome focus on capturing metrics to demonstrate the extent to which women are included, and, effective July 1, 2020, the Department has begun capturing such data in support of future WPS reporting.

The focus for our first reporting period next year will be the collection of data showing the extent to which women are currently included in DHS training opportunities, however resourced, and how much DHS and partner agency funding is expended to support this training. We will use this baseline information to work with DHS Components to identify opportunities for future improvement.

In addition to DHS training and exchange programs with our foreign partners, we have identified other DHS activities that exemplify the WPS Strategy. As an example, the Department is very active in the fight against female genital mutilation and engages in numerous operational level activities that advance this goal that aligns with WPS. Further, we continue to identify programs and activities that generally support WPS goals, and out of which there may be some further WPS opportunities. For example, the Department uses its investigative and other authorities to fight human trafficking, which disproportionately affects vulnerable women and children globally.

As part of CRCL's initial WPS efforts, I was personally in touch with DHS Component heads and senior executives over the past few months to ensure WPS is on the radar of senior

leadership at the Department. We confirmed that DHS Components and Headquarters Offices have extensive engagement with foreign allies and partners to support their security activities. These include:

- Transportation Security Administration;
- Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency;
- U.S. Coast Guard;
- U.S. Customs and Border Protection;
- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement;
- Science and Technology Directorate; and
- Office of Intelligence and Analysis.

This Department-wide engagement suggests DHS senior leaders have unique opportunities to encourage executive leadership of our foreign agency partners to do more in support of WPS.

On May 5, 2020, CRCL hosted a kickoff meeting with approximately 30 senior-level Component officials who are helping CRCL identify which of their Component units have training or operational activities, in addition to the training support identified above, that may be aligned with WPS goals, or adjusted to support those goals. In addition to supporting the baseline reporting effort, this meeting is triggering helpful discussions about how the Department might identify additional WPS-aligned activities and improve DHS efforts in the future.

DHS Leadership, including Executive Leadership, appears genuinely excited about the opportunity to be a significant intergovernmental partner in the WPS efforts across the U.S. government. On a personal note, I will share that very early in my federal career I had the opportunity to work briefly at the U.S. Department of Labor's Women's Bureau, which is the only federal agency mandated to represent the needs of wage-earning women in the public policy process and celebrated its centennial anniversary in June 2020. About a decade later, while at the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board, I was very involved in the first-ever "Glass Ceiling" study of federal employees. It seems fitting then, that as I near the end of my federal career, working on WPS Act compliance bookends a career involved in working on women's economic empowerment issues.

I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions for WPS at DHS. Thank you again for the opportunity to appear before you today; I look forward to your questions.