

**DRAFT TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE DANIEL ANTONIO
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Chairman Crawford, Ranking Member Himes, and distinguished Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Danny Alvarez. I represent District 69 in the Florida House of Representatives, covering part of Hillsborough County. I am a lawyer, a veteran of the United States Army, Chair of the Florida House Criminal Justice Subcommittee, and Vice Chair of the Florida House Security and Threat Assessment Committee.

I am here today with a simple message: Florida will not wait for the federal government to defend our people. We respect our federal partners. We value coordination. But when threats are already touching our communities, our infrastructure, our economy, our military assets, our ports, our universities, our agriculture, and our space enterprise, state leaders have an obligation to act.

Counterintelligence is often discussed as if it only happens in Washington, inside federal agencies, or inside classified spaces. But the targets are not only in Washington. The targets are in our states. They are in our cities. They are in our seaports, airports, universities, research institutions, defense communities, power systems, water systems, agricultural supply chains, public-sector networks, and private companies.

Florida is one of the clearest examples in the country.

Florida is not simply a large state. Florida is a national security state. We are home to major military installations, defense contractors, Coast Guard operations, special operations equities, maritime infrastructure, aviation assets, and the Space Coast. Florida’s defense economy is enormous. A recent statewide defense-impact summary reported tens of billions of dollars in direct defense spending, hundreds of thousands of jobs, and more than \$100 billion in statewide economic impact tied to Florida’s military and defense presence.

And this is not theoretical for us. Earlier this year, federal authorities charged a Florida man in connection with an alleged attempted bombing at MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, home to U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command. According to public reporting, a possible improvised explosive device was found outside the base’s visitor center, and the installation remained on heightened security status afterward. That incident is a stark reminder that Florida is not merely adjacent to national security. Florida is part of the target set our adversaries and hostile actors study.

Florida is also the gateway to America's future in space. Patrick Space Force Base, Cape Canaveral Space Force Station, and the Eastern Range are central to national security space launch operations. That makes Florida an attractive target not just in the military domain, but in the civilian, commercial, research, and space domains as well.

In plain terms, Florida is an exceptionally high-value target. Our adversaries know that. We should know it just as clearly.

Our ports present another example. Florida's ports support national commerce, military mobility, energy flows, and regional resilience. Jacksonville is Florida's largest container port. Tampa Bay is tied to energy, maritime trade, and critical infrastructure. South Florida connects the United States to the Caribbean, Latin America, and global supply chains. If an adversary wanted to collect information, create disruption, influence decisions, or exploit access, Florida's maritime environment would be an obvious place to look.

Our universities, research institutions, health systems, agricultural economy, telecommunications networks, water systems, and emergency-response infrastructure also matter. These are not just local assets. They are part of the national security ecosystem.

That is why the state role matters.

In the 2026 legislative session, I introduced House Bill 945, the Statewide Counterintelligence and Counterterrorism Unit. The bill would have required the Florida Department of Law Enforcement to establish and administer a statewide capability focused on detecting, identifying, assessing, and countering threats from foreign adversaries, terrorist actors, insider threats, corporate threats, and hostile intelligence activity.

The bill was not designed to duplicate the federal government. It was designed to close gaps that states are already seeing.

Florida already has a domestic security structure. FDLE works through regional operational centers and Regional Domestic Security Task Forces. My goal was to build on that architecture, not replace it. The concept was to give Florida a proactive, statewide intelligence and law-enforcement capability that could recognize indicators across regions and sectors before a threat becomes a crisis.

HB 945 proposed an initial leadership and organizational core, followed by regional teams aligned with Florida's existing domestic security structure. Those teams would include intelligence analysts, counterintelligence agents, and federal, state, and local liaison officers. That alignment matters because threats do not respect jurisdictional boundaries.

A suspicious land transaction near a sensitive facility, a foreign-linked procurement concern, a cyber intrusion against a local government, unusual activity around a port, research targeting at a university, or insider access at a critical facility may all appear separately. Taken together, they may reveal a pattern. The state has to be able to see those patterns.

In my view, the clear difference between good intelligence and great intelligence is proactivity. Florida should be ready for threats before they present themselves to our law-enforcement apparatus. If we wait until an adversary has already stolen the data, penetrated the network,

influenced the decision, acquired the land, compromised the insider, or disrupted the system, we are too late.

Florida's openness is one of our greatest strengths. It is also one of the reasons we are targeted. We are a global state. We welcome investment, tourism, innovation, immigration, research, and commerce. We want Florida to remain open, free, prosperous, and competitive. But openness without awareness becomes vulnerability.

The answer is not fear. The answer is disciplined security.

The answer is not targeting lawful speech or lawful association. The answer is identifying conduct, coordination, access, intent, foreign direction, exploitation, and threat-linked behavior.

I want to be very clear on this point. State-level counterintelligence cannot become a license to monitor Floridians for who they are, where they come from, what they believe, or what they lawfully say. That is not what I support. That is not what Florida should build. A serious counterintelligence capability must protect civil liberties while protecting the state. Those are not competing missions. They are both essential to legitimacy.

The answer is also not a state acting alone. The answer is a federal-state partnership that recognizes states as frontline sensors, not passive recipients.

States often see the first indicators. Local law enforcement may see the suspicious activity. A port authority may see the access problem. A university may see the research targeting. A county may see the land-use issue. A state agency may see the procurement vulnerability. A business may see the insider risk. A school district may see foreign influence, cyber targeting, or public-safety concerns before they ever rise to the level of a federal case.

But right now, our system does not consistently empower states to connect those indicators.

I believe Congress can help in five practical ways.

First, Congress should strengthen the flow of timely, usable counterintelligence information to state and local leaders. Not every threat briefing needs to be classified. States need more unclassified, controlled, and actionable information that can be shared with governors, legislatures, attorneys general, state law enforcement, fusion centers, emergency managers, port authorities, education leaders, and critical infrastructure operators.

Second, Congress should support state-level training and best practices. If states are expected to help defend the homeland against foreign adversaries, then state and local officials need training on what foreign intelligence activity looks like in the real world. That includes procurement risk, insider threat, cyber targeting, influence operations, transnational repression, research security, land-use vulnerabilities, and critical infrastructure access.

Third, Congress should help define guardrails. States need to protect their people without infringing on constitutional rights. That means clear standards focused on behavior, threat activity, foreign direction, and exploitation, not political viewpoint, religion, ethnicity, or lawful expression.

Fourth, Congress should encourage better integration between federal agencies, state domestic security structures, and fusion centers. Florida does not need a disconnected intelligence

bureaucracy. We need coordination that is timely, lawful, practical, and trusted. Federal agencies should know who to call in the state. State agencies should know what they can share. Local partners should know where their information goes and what comes back.

Fifth, Congress should recognize that adversaries exploit seams. They exploit the seam between federal and state authority. They exploit the seam between the public and private sector. They exploit the seam between law enforcement and intelligence. They exploit the seam between economic development and national security. They exploit the seam between lawful openness and strategic negligence. Our response has to close those seams.

HB 945 did not become law this session. It advanced through Government Operations, Judiciary, and Budget before dying in State Affairs at the end of session. But the fact that the bill moved through multiple committees shows that Florida is taking this seriously. It also shows that this conversation is not going away.

I am not done.

Florida will continue working to build a proactive capability that protects our citizens, strengthens public safety, safeguards critical infrastructure, and supports our federal partners. We will continue refining the model. We will continue improving the safeguards. We will continue listening to law enforcement, intelligence professionals, civil-liberties experts, local officials, and private-sector stakeholders.

But we will not pretend this threat is theoretical.

Foreign adversaries understand the value of Florida. They understand our military presence. They understand our ports. They understand our space assets. They understand our universities. They understand our agriculture. They understand our economy. They understand our political and cultural influence.

America's adversaries are coordinated, patient, and strategic. Our response must be coordinated, patient, and strategic as well. The federal government has unique authorities, collection capabilities, and global reach. States have proximity, local visibility, and constitutional responsibility for public safety. We need both.

The lesson I hope this Committee takes from Florida is straightforward: state governments are no longer peripheral to national security. We are part of the front line.

Florida will act. We will protect our people. We will defend our infrastructure. We will work with our federal partners. And where gaps exist, we will move to close them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

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Note: These sources are included for drafting support and factual verification. The testimony body is written without visible footnotes or citation codes for ease of review and oral delivery.

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