



TESTIMONY OF

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## **Introduction**

Distinguished Members of this Committee:

I am proud to submit this testimony on behalf of the 260,000 people across our nation and across the world who make up the Department of Homeland Security.

Our workforce makes sure that travelers reach their destinations safely; they protect our shores and harbors; they help families rebuild after the devastation of a natural disaster; they guarantee our ability to safely and securely turn on our computers, faucets, and lights; they keep deadly drugs off of our streets and away from our children; and they work to secure our border, despite the broken and outdated immigration system in which they operate.

The men and women of DHS are our most important and vital resource. Serving alongside them is the greatest honor of my life, and supporting them has been my top priority since taking office. I am immensely proud of our expanded Departmental efforts to solicit and incorporate feedback from personnel across all components and all levels, our focus on ensuring every employee works in a high-quality facility, and our work making new resources available across the Department for employee mental health and well-being. Our collaboration with Congress has been essential for these successes, including our efforts to fully fund TSA's employee pay initiative and ensure each of TSA's 65,000 employees is paid at a level comparable to their counterparts on the General Schedule pay scale.

Together, we are enabling our workforce to effectively prevent, prepare for, and respond to the increasingly diverse and complex threats and challenges facing our country.

The most urgent and lethal of these threats to American communities today is fentanyl. The devastation of fentanyl has been escalating over at least the past five years. Drug deaths nationwide reached a record high last year, driven by transnational trafficking organizations intent on bringing death and destruction to our communities. Through U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), we are leading an unprecedented effort against these criminals. We are screening people, cargo, and vehicles at our ports of entry more efficiently and effectively, and we seized nearly two million pounds of narcotics last fiscal year thanks to new technologies and our robust partnerships with federal, state, tribal, and local law enforcement agencies.

Combatting the scourge of fentanyl is just one of twelve priorities I set to advance the wide-ranging mission of our Department. Each priority reflects the evolving threat landscape our country faces, and is yielding real results for the American people.

We are eager to work with Congress to continue innovating and to expand our capabilities to confront the threats and challenges facing our communities. To give one example, Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) can be used to convey narcotics across borders, as well as to violate Secret Service protective operations, disrupt airport operations, and conduct kinetic

attacks. It is vital that Congress act this year to extend and expand the Department's counter-UAS (C-UAS) authorities to protect against this malicious drone activity.

The terrorism-related threat to the United States now predominately comes in the form of lone offenders and small cells, for instance, so DHS has, in response, announced \$2 billion in preparedness grant funding for this fiscal year, including \$305 million for the National Security Grant Program to support nonprofit organizations' preparedness activities and enhance broader state and local preparedness efforts. DHS has also invested more than \$50 million over the past three years to help communities prevent acts of targeted violence and terrorism, and we have done so in a way that respects civil rights and liberties, and privacy protections. We are grateful for Congress's funding of these grant programs.

We must address the flawed foundation on which our immigration system is built: there remains an approximately two million case backlog in our immigration courts; two million Dreamers still lack immigration status and cannot fully contribute to their communities; and our immigration laws provide for just 140,000 immigrant visas each fiscal year for noncitizens to come to the United States for work, despite ten million open jobs in the U.S. labor market.

Within the confines of that broken system, our Department's approach is working. Under President Biden's leadership, we have led the largest expansion of lawful, safe, and orderly pathways for people to come to the United States in decades, and we have, at the same time, imposed tougher consequences on those who choose not to use those pathways – consequences that have resulted in the return, removal, and expulsion of more than 665,000 people in the first half of this fiscal year. We secured the first increase in Border Patrol Agent hiring in more than a decade, adding 300 in FY2023 and asking for 350 in FY2024. We launched an unprecedented campaign to disrupt and dismantle human smuggling networks, resulting in the arrest of nearly 14,000 smugglers. We launched regional advertising campaigns and broadcast our message to would-be immigrants across the Hemisphere: that our borders are not open, and people who cross our border unlawfully and without a legal basis to remain will be promptly processed and removed. America needs an immigration system for the 21st century, and only Congress can provide a sustainable one.

Natural disasters are intensifying. While we cannot eliminate the climate threats we face as a nation, DHS is working with partners across the federal government to support communities impacted by unprecedented extreme weather events and help them strengthen their long-term recovery and resilience.

Urgent and unforeseeable challenges continue to threaten international trade and travel. To ensure we are prepared to respond rapidly when these challenges arise, DHS has established first-of-their-kind Department-wide incident management teams to lead all-of-government responses. The results of this commitment to Departmental cohesion and improved mission execution can be seen in the success of our efforts to vaccinate millions of Americans against COVID-19 and provide protection for fleeing Ukrainian citizens through Uniting for Ukraine.

Finally, as the world has grown exponentially more connected over the last 20 years, so too has the ability of malicious actors to exploit these connections. Nation states like the People's

Republic of China (PRC) and Russia are now capable of threatening any community in the world.

In response, DHS is working collaboratively with our partners across government, at home and abroad, and with industry and academia, to manage these security risks. We are addressing cyber risks through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's (CISA)'s Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative (JCDC), which was recently expanded to include major energy and financial sector firms. Through the Cyber Safety Review Board (CSRB), experts from the public and private sectors develop actionable recommendations to strengthen our collective security, and our Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs) provide businesses and critical infrastructure owners with a roadmap to protect themselves and the people they serve.

We are looking to the future. I have directed a 90-day Department-wide sprint to assess how threats posed by the PRC will evolve, and how DHS will best position itself to guard against future manifestations of these threats. I have also directed the creation of our Department's first Artificial Intelligence (AI) Task Force, which is driving specific applications of AI to advance our homeland security missions – from deploying AI to more ably screen cargo and identify the importation of goods produced with forced labor, to better detecting fentanyl shipments and interdicting the flow of precursor chemicals.

With our daily work touching each of these priority areas and more, the Department of Homeland Security's mission has never been more vital to the safety and well-being of our nation. Our components are collaborating more closely than ever before. Americans are safe today because of the work – on the border, in the air, at sea, and across the country and around the world – that the Department of Homeland Security performs every day.

## **Combating Terrorism and Targeted Violence**

Since this Department's inception, the threat landscape has evolved dramatically. DHS has remained agile and vigilant to address all terrorism-related threats to the homeland.

### *Foreign Terrorist Threats*

Our assessments indicate that foreign terrorist organizations (FTOs) will continue to maintain a highly visible presence online and prioritize messaging focused on inspiring homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) to conduct attacks in the United States. Media branches of designated FTOs, including the Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) and al-Qa'ida, continue to target U.S. and Western-based audiences with their media releases. These releases address a variety of topics, including operational and communication security guidance, such as warning their supporters about the risks of engaging with associates online, and encouraging the use of violence by their supporters. ISIS and its supporters continue to call for attacks in the United States, and supporters often share tactics and techniques for increasing the effectiveness and reducing the likelihood of detection. Additionally, ISIS-Khorasan (ISIS-K) continues to hone its external operations capability – including using social media to contact potential supporters – and continues to represent a threat that requires close coordination and cooperation with our international allies.

We continue to see that Iran, a state sponsor of terrorism, and its partner, Lebanese Hezbollah, pose an enduring threat to the homeland, evidenced by Iran's public statements threatening retaliation in the United States for Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Quds Force (IRGC-QF) Commander Qasem Soleimani's death and arrests of IRGC and Hezbollah members plotting operations in the United States. In the past several years, U.S. law enforcement has arrested numerous individuals for spying on Iranian dissidents in the United States and for acting as agents of influence for the Iranian Government. In August 2022, federal prosecutors unsealed charges against an IRGC member for plotting to assassinate a former U.S. official. In January 2023, prosecutors announced charges and a new arrest in connection with an assassination plot directed from Iran. Members of an Eastern European organized crime group are alleged to have plotted to murder a U.S. citizen of Iranian origin in New York City who has publicly opposed Iran's government. Given its capabilities, Iran could advance an attack plot targeted at the United States with little to no warning. DHS continues to work closely with other law enforcement agencies and the Intelligence Community (IC) to remain aware of ongoing threat streams and take preventative actions, as appropriate.

DHS works closely with our law enforcement, national security, and IC partners to continuously improve our ability to identify individuals who pose a national security or public safety threat and who seek to travel to the United States or receive an immigration benefit. In FY 2022, the National Vetting Center (NVC), managed by DHS, expanded support to DHS and the Department of State (DOS) for the vetting of refugee applicants and all non-immigrant visa applicants worldwide. Through technology advancements, the NVC has increased efficiencies in vetting processes, improving our ability to identify potential threats.

We continue to build partnerships with foreign governments that increase our information sharing and vetting capabilities. DHS is constantly striving to increase our ability to engage in biometric comparison with our foreign partners, and recently added a new requirement to the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to require participating countries to enter into an Enhanced Border Security Partnership (EBSP). Under EBSP, DHS and VWP member countries will be able to conduct biometric checks against each others' biometric data to authenticate the identity of individuals seeking to travel under the VWP, and to receive information with regard to whether nationals of individual VWP countries traveling to the United States or to our VWP partners represent a threat to the security and welfare of the homeland or our partners.

As a key part of the interagency approach to countering all threats, DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) is uniquely positioned to provide timely and accurate intelligence to the broadest audience at the lowest classification level possible. DHS, the Intelligence Community (IC), and our state, local, tribal, territorial, and campus (SLTTC) partners rely on I&A's contributions and unique authorities to share this information. DHS will continue to leverage our deployed intelligence professionals to ensure the timely sharing of information and intelligence with DHS components and SLTTC partners, in accordance with applicable law and privacy, civil rights, civil liberties, and intelligence oversight policies. These activities, as well as the information that I&A collects around the country about the fentanyl trade, human smuggling, and other serious threats to the homeland, yield unique insights that are invaluable to our DHS and IC partners with related missions.

## *Violent Extremism and Targeted Violence*

The evolving threat to the homeland also includes lone offenders or small groups motivated by a wide range of ideologies and personal grievances, which DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) assess to be the primary terrorist threat to the homeland. These can include individuals inspired by FTOs and domestic violent extremists (DVEs) based and operating primarily in the United States who seek to further political or social goals wholly or in part through unlawful acts of force or violence without direction or inspiration from an FTO or foreign power. DVEs are motivated by various factors, including biases against racial and religious minorities, grievances towards women, perceived government overreach, and conspiracy theories promoting violence.

In June 2023, DHS and the FBI jointly assessed that a wide range of DVEs continue to pursue attacks against a diverse set of targets, including democratic institutions, government officials, critical infrastructure, and soft targets in pursuit of their social or political goals. DVE reactions to flashpoint events likely will contribute to violence or criminal activity carried out primarily by lone actors – with a potentially heightened threat environment during the 2024 election cycle – and DVEs will use evolving conspiracy theories to justify threats of violence.

Among DVEs, DHS assesses that racially or ethnically motivated violent extremists (RMVEs), such as those who advocate for the superiority of the white race, present the most lethal DVE threat to the homeland. In many cases, prior to their planned attacks, threat actors have spent inordinate amounts of time online viewing violent material and engaging with like-minded individuals. RMVEs often have the most persistent and concerning transnational connections because adherents to this ideology are present throughout the West. They frequently communicate with each other and, at times, have inspired attacks. Such connectivity with overseas violent extremists might lead to a greater risk of U.S.-based RMVEs mobilizing to violence.

DHS has invested more than \$50 million over the past three years in communities across the United States to help prevent acts of targeted violence and terrorism through the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) Grant Program. Managed by the DHS Center for Prevention Programs and Partnerships (CP3) and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), this program provides funding for SLTTC governments, nonprofits, and institutions of higher education to establish or enhance capabilities to prevent targeted violence and terrorism. Last September, DHS announced 43 TVTP grant awards to entities in 20 states, totaling \$20 million for FY 2022. These awards fulfill the grant program's focus on prioritizing the prevention of domestic violent extremist acts, while respecting individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

DHS also provides security funding to support facility hardening and other operational and physical security enhancements for nonprofit organizations, including religious institutions, at risk of terrorist attacks through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP). The Department is grateful that Congress supported this critically important program by providing \$305 million in the FY 2023 Consolidated Omnibus Appropriations Act, an increase of \$55 million from FY 2022 levels. The President's FY 2024 Budget proposes a further increase to

\$360 million. These funds are in addition to the resources provided by DHS to our state and local partners through the Homeland Security Grant Program (HSGP), in which DHS designated Combating Domestic Violent Extremism as a “National Priority Area” for both FY 2021 and FY 2022. As a result of this designation, between FY 2021 and FY 2022, states and local governments across our nation spent over \$111 million in grant funding on capabilities to detect and protect against these threats.

Through the Presidential Threat Protection Act of 2000, Congress formally authorized the U.S. Secret Service (USSS) to establish the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) to conduct research, training, and consultation on threat assessment and the prevention of targeted violence. NTAC leads the field of targeted violence prevention by producing world-class research examining all forms of domestic terrorism, targeted violence, mass casualty attacks, and attacks against K-12 schools.

NTAC’s experts provide training and guidance for professionals from a wide range of agencies and institutions on establishing threat assessment frameworks and targeted violence prevention programs unique to their organization’s missions and needs. In FY 2022, NTAC delivered over 280 trainings and briefings to over 28,000 participants, including state and local law enforcement, government officials, educators, mental health professionals, faith-based leaders, and workplace security managers. The number of events and participants reached by NTAC in FY 2022 represents the highest total in the Center’s history.

On January 25, 2023, NTAC released its most comprehensive analysis of mass attacks to date, titled *Mass Attacks in Public Spaces: 2016 – 2020*. This study analyzes 173 attacks perpetrated from 2016 through 2020 in public and semi-public locations in the United States, including businesses, restaurants, retail outlets, schools, houses of worship, open spaces, and other public locations. On the day of the release, NTAC hosted a virtual training event to highlight the report’s findings. Over 21,000 public safety officials from across community sectors registered for the event, representing all 50 states and over 80 foreign countries.

The Department continues to see threats to federal employees and the targeting of federal facilities. The Federal Protective Service (FPS), a law enforcement agency within the Department, leads our efforts to provide integrated law enforcement and security services to protect more than 9,000 federal facilities across the nation, safeguarding the more than 1.4 million federal employees and visitors to these facilities. FPS works closely with federal, state, and local law enforcement across the country to investigate these threats and respond to incidents at federal facilities.

To prepare for this threat, the Department has embraced a community-based approach to preventing terrorism and targeted violence by building trust, partnerships, and collaboration across every level of government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and the communities we serve, while respecting First Amendment protections. We must make it harder to carry out an attack and reduce the potential for loss of life; one important way we do that is by helping to prevent mobilization to violence.

CP3 uses a public health-informed approach to targeted violence and terrorism prevention. Our efforts focus on creating evidence-based prevention resources and helping prevention providers build strengths, such as social cohesion, trust, and awareness at the individual, family, and community levels to decrease the risk of terrorism and targeted violence, such as school or workplace violence, premeditated hate-fueled violence, and terrorism. The focus of a public health-informed approach is on the health, safety, and well-being of entire populations. This approach employs strategies that have been used in other forms of violence prevention for decades, backed by program evaluations and research in areas like public health, psychology, and criminology. CP3 partners with independent research organizations to collect data, evaluate programming, and gather lessons learned from across the United States to continually improve the evidence base for terrorism and targeted violence prevention. CP3 holds privacy, civil rights, civil liberties, and the First Amendment as pillars of its prevention mission. CP3 routinely engages with DHS's Privacy Office and Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to ensure all public-facing prevention resources, grants, and training materials respect Americans' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

### *Weapons of Mass Destruction*

Although terrorist capabilities to conduct large-scale attacks have been degraded by U.S. counterterrorism operations and policies, terrorists remain interested in acquiring and using weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in attacks against U.S. interests and the homeland. DHS will continue its efforts to secure the homeland from the enduring threat of terrorist use and proliferation of WMD, which poses profound and, in some cases, existential dangers to the United States. This threat continues to evolve due to advances in science and technology and as dual-use knowledge, goods, materials, and technology applicable to WMD continue to proliferate. We cannot rule out the risk of unsecured or vulnerable fissile and other source materials in the United States. DHS will help maintain a multi-layered defensive domestic network for detecting nuclear and radiological material out of regulatory control in order to disrupt WMD terrorism threats and prevent nuclear terrorism from occurring within the United States. DHS will continue developing, acquiring, and providing equipment and training to federal, state, and local partners to prevent, detect, and mitigate the impacts of these threats.

### **Cyber Threats**

Our interconnectedness and the technology that enables it—the cyber ecosystem—expose us to a dynamic and evolving threat environment, one that is not contained by borders or limited to centralized actors, and one that impacts governments, the private sector, civil society, and every individual. As a result, cyber threats from foreign governments and transnational criminals remain among the most prominent threats facing our nation. Hostile nations like Russia, China, Iran, and North Korea, as well as cybercriminals around the world, continually grow more sophisticated and create more adverse consequences.

Within the past three years, we have seen numerous cybersecurity incidents impacting organizations of all sizes and disrupting critical services, from the SolarWinds supply chain compromise to the widespread vulnerabilities generated by open source software like Log4j. Further, ransomware incidents—like those affecting JBS Foods, Kaseya, a major pipeline



company, the Common Spirit hospital system, and the recent exploitation of the managed file transfer solution, MOVEit Transfer—continue to increase. We continue to believe there is significant under-reporting of ransomware incidents, and we assess that ransomware attacks targeting U.S. networks will increase in the near and long term. Cybercriminals have developed effective business models to increase their financial gain, likelihood of success, and anonymity.

The Department is committed to keeping Americans safe from the devastating effects of cybercrimes. Cyber criminals' primary motivation is financial gain, and criminals show little regard for whom they target. Cybercrime investigators at the USSS and HSI are dedicated to seizing and returning stolen funds to the victims and arresting those responsible. Cybercrimes are often transnational, with the criminal actors, their infrastructure, and their victims spread across the globe. The USSS was recognized by the Attorney General for its contributions to the dismantling of the Hive ransomware infrastructure used to communicate with other criminals and disrupting the group's ability to attack victims. USSS and HSI continue to partner with federal and SLTT law enforcement and with international and foreign law enforcement in combating cybercrimes.

The Department plays an important role in helping to protect our nation's critical infrastructure from these attacks. The private sector, which owns and operates most of the nation's critical infrastructure, plays a vital role in working with CISA and other Sector Risk Management Agencies (SRMAs), such as TSA and USCG, to ensure that we are aware of new attack campaigns and intrusions. That awareness in turn helps CISA advise other potential victims—increasing the nation's collective cyber defenses through our collaborative efforts.

In March 2022, President Biden signed the Cyber Incident Reporting for Critical Infrastructure Act of 2022 (CIRCIA) into law. CIRCIA marks an important milestone in improving America's cybersecurity. The increased number of incident reports that will be received from our private sector partners as a result of this new law will enable CISA, in partnership with other federal agencies, to build a common understanding of how our adversaries are targeting U.S. networks and critical infrastructure. This information will fill critical information gaps and allow us to rapidly deploy resources and render assistance to victims suffering cyber intrusions where appropriate, analyze incoming reporting across sectors to spot trends, and quickly share that information with network defenders to warn other potential victims. We are grateful to Congress for passing this historic bipartisan legislation, marking a critical step forward in the collective cybersecurity of our nation.

### *Cyber Threat Mitigation and Resilience*

To respond to evolving cyber threats and increase our nation's cybersecurity and resilience, DHS has established several vehicles, including:

- The Joint Cyber Defense Collaborative (JCDC) develops and executes joint cyber defense planning with partners at all levels of government and the private sector to prevent and reduce the impacts of cyber intrusions and to ensure a unified response when they occur.

- The Cyber Safety Review Board (CSRB) is a groundbreaking public-private advisory board dedicated to after-action review of significant cyber incidents. The CSRB published its first report last summer addressing the risk posed by vulnerabilities in the widely used “Log4j” open-source software library. Its second review of the recent intrusions associated with Lapsus\$, a global extortion-focused hacker group, is nearing completion. We are asking Congress to strengthen the ability of DHS to carry out comprehensive reviews of significant cyber incidents in ways that will allow us to learn from past experience and strengthen our response to future threats.
- The Cybersecurity Performance Goals (CPGs) are voluntary practices that outline the highest-priority baseline measures businesses and critical infrastructure owners and operators of all sizes can take to protect themselves against cyber threats. In March 2023, based on a rigorous process involving stakeholders from all critical sectors and our government partners, CISA published an initial update to the CPGs. The CPGs are now categorized around the NIST Cybersecurity Framework (CSF) functions to help organizations more easily prioritize investments as part of a broader cybersecurity program built around the CSF. They include updated goals regarding multifactor authentication and recovery from cyber incidents. By clearly outlining measurable goals based on easily understandable criteria such as cost, complexity, and impact, the CPGs are designed to apply to organizations of all sizes.
- The Cyber Incident Reporting Council (CIRC), which includes 33 Federal departments and agencies, is working to coordinate, deconflict, and harmonize Federal cyber incident reporting requirements, including those issued through regulation.
- Security Directives and Emergency Amendments issued by TSA to surface transportation owners and operators and certain TSA-regulated aircraft operators and airports require the implementation of critically important and urgently needed cybersecurity measures to address persistent cybersecurity threats against these sectors.

## **Emerging Technology Threats**

### *Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Threats*

UASs, or drones, offer tremendous benefits to our economy and society, but their misuse poses real security challenges. The rapid proliferation of drones and their expanded use by hobbyists, professionals, and threat actors have required DHS to shift its response efforts to mitigate smaller, more agile, and less attributable dangers across all mission areas while still supporting the lawful use of these advanced technologies within our nation. Drones around the world have conducted kinetic attacks with payloads of explosives or firearms, caused dangerous interference with manned aviation, disrupted airport operations (causing significant economic harm), and disrupted and damaged critical infrastructure. Nearly every day, transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) attempt to use drones to convey illicit narcotics and other contraband. TCOs also use drones to conduct hostile surveillance of law enforcement and guide human smuggling across the border.

I thank Congress for extending existing law that provides DHS’s C-UAS authority through September 30, 2023. Ensuring that the existing authorities did not lapse was vital to our mission, including protecting the President and Vice President, patrolling the Southwest border,

securing certain federal facilities and assets, and safeguarding the public. DHS has exercised its current C-UAS authority by successfully executing C-UAS operations at mass gatherings, Special Event Assessment Rating (SEAR) events, and National Special Security Events (NSSEs), including the 2022 World Series, the Indianapolis 500, the United Nations General Assembly, the Democratic and Republican National Conventions, the State of the Union address, the MLB All Star Game, the New York City Marathon, and the Boston Marathon. At all times, DHS engages in these activities consistent with applicable law and in a manner that protects individuals' privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

To ensure the Department can continue its C-UAS activities, including protecting the 2026 World Cup events, both the Department and the Administration remain committed to a multi-year extension as well as an expansion of existing authorities. Any lapse in DHS's current C-UAS authority would entail serious risks for homeland security, as DHS would have to cease or curtail existing C-UAS operations that protect the homeland. Additionally, the Department and the Administration look forward to working with Congress, including this Committee, to expand C-UAS authority to address critical gaps in the current law, such as a lack of protection for U.S. airports and the inability of DHS to partner on C-UAS activities with SLTT enforcement officials or critical infrastructure owners or operators. To further close the gap with our SLTT law enforcement partners, we have requested, on a pilot basis, authority for a limited number of SLTT partners to detect, identify, and under appropriate federal oversight and training – including privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties protections – to mitigate drones posing a credible threat to their jurisdictions or at their facilities, respectively.

Congressional action is required, as DHS's authority to detect and counter drone threats will expire on September 30, 2023. A lapse in this authority and failing to close known vulnerabilities by expanding C-UAS authority could have catastrophic implications for homeland security.

### *Cryptocurrency*

While most cryptocurrency is used legitimately, cryptocurrency has attributes that have already been exploited by criminals, terrorists, and other adversaries to facilitate their operations. Most notably, as it has become easier to access and more widely used in general commerce, many transnational ransomware operations are using the cryptocurrency ecosystem to obfuscate illicit requests and to facilitate the receipt of ransoms.

Many components within DHS are focused on the rising illicit use of digital assets, developing and providing training, investigating, and collaborating with interagency partners. Pursuant to the President's Executive Order 14067, *Ensuring Responsible Development of Digital Assets*, the Department contributed to the whole-of-government effort to address concerns with respect to digital assets.

For example, with domestic and international law enforcement partners, the USSS has achieved notable successes in combating cyber-enabled financial crimes, including dismantling two centralized virtual currency providers that supported extensive criminal activity, and the

successful investigation of a Russia-based criminal scheme attempting to defraud cryptocurrency exchange customers of \$16.8 million.

HSI has offices in over 50 countries and works to combat cybercrimes, including by providing training to international partners and analytical assistance in tracing digital assets. HSI investigations related to virtual assets have risen from one criminal investigation in 2011 to over 530 criminal investigations in FY 2022—seizing over \$4 billion in virtual assets this last fiscal year. HSI has also trained law enforcement partners in more than 20 countries on dark web and cryptocurrency investigations, and regularly works with victims to remediate vulnerabilities before they are exploited.

### *Artificial Intelligence (AI)*

AI will drastically alter the threat landscape and augment the arsenal of tools we possess to succeed in the face of these threats. DHS will lead in the responsible use of AI to secure the homeland and in defending against the malicious use of this transformational technology. As we do this, we will ensure that our use of AI is rigorously tested to avoid bias and disparate impact and is clearly explainable to the people we serve.

Malicious actors are increasingly using more advanced AI, powered by more data, more accessible computing resources, and more advanced machine learning algorithms. To counter these threats, DHS's use of trustworthy AI can help us more effectively and efficiently accomplish our mission to secure the homeland. DHS has taken several steps, including:

- Establishing the Department's first AI Task Force to drive specific applications of AI to advance our critical homeland security missions. The Task Force is working to enhance the integrity of our supply chains and the broader trade environment by deploying AI to more ably screen cargo, identify the importation of goods produced with forced labor, and manage risk. It is also charged with using AI to better detect fentanyl shipments, identify and interdict the flow of precursor chemicals around the world, and target for disruption key nodes in criminal networks.
- Tasking our Homeland Security Advisory Council to study the intersection of AI and homeland security and deliver findings that will help guide our use of it and defense against it.
- Working with other responsible partners—domestically and internationally—to share best practices and develop standards.
- In response to requirements from the 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and Executive Order 13960, DHS is finalizing policies and procedures for trustworthy AI acquisition and use with due consideration of risks and impacts associated with AI. This includes the evaluation of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties impacts and misuse, degradation, and non-operability risks.
- Convening leading experts, academics, advocates, and others to understand evolving adversary AI capabilities that could be used to exploit or overcome security measures at our physical borders, in cyberspace, in election systems, and beyond.

## Counternarcotics

DHS employs a multi-layered approach to mitigating and countering narcotics trafficking and threats of all types using our extensive liaison networks, domestic and foreign partnerships, personnel, and technology deployments such as Non-Intrusive Inspection (NII) capabilities. The increased production and trafficking of synthetic opioids from Mexico have prompted the interagency to implement a whole-of-government approach, including a number of DHS components and efforts, to combat these threats.

With the support of Congress, CBP continues to make significant investments and improvements in drug detection and interdiction technology to detect the presence of illicit drugs, including illicit opioids, in all operating environments, while CBP's National Targeting Center uses advanced analytics and targeting capabilities to identify critical logistics, financial, and communication nodes, and exploit areas of weakness in opioid trafficking networks. Leveraging these investments, CBP seized 11,200 pounds of fentanyl in FY 2021 and 14,700 pounds in FY 2022, as compared to 2,804 pounds in FY 2019. Thus far in FY 2023, CBP has seized 19,821 pounds of fentanyl by applying these same investments.

CBP seeks to prevent drug trafficking through POEs, which is where most synthetic drugs enter the United States. Recent DHS Office of Intelligence and Analysis reporting indicates that Mexico-based drug traffickers involved in both drug and human smuggling rarely exploit migrants to smuggle fentanyl into the United States. Analysts continue to assess that the vast majority of fentanyl that enters the United States moves through U.S. POEs, and CBP data indicates that U.S. citizens were responsible for transporting the fentanyl seized in 77 percent of seizures in FY 2023 to date. Personal vehicles remain, by volume, the primary method of conveyance for illicit drugs entering the country over land, with notable increases within commercial truck conveyances for methamphetamine. The NII Systems Program provides technologies to inspect and screen cars, trucks, railcars, sea containers, as well as personal luggage, packages, parcels, and flat mail through either X-ray or gamma-ray imaging systems. CBP officers use NII systems to effectively and efficiently detect anomalies in an effort to prevent contraband, including drugs, unreported currency, guns, ammunition, and other illegal merchandise, as well as inadmissible persons, from being smuggled into the United States, while having a minimal impact on the flow of legitimate travel and commerce.

CBP also robustly enforces the Synthetics Trafficking and Overdose Prevention (STOP) Act to prevent trafficking by mail. CBP operates within major international mail facilities to inspect international mail and parcels arriving from more than 180 countries. CBP and the U.S. Postal Service are working to increase the amount of advance electronic data received on international mail. This advance information enables HSI and other agencies to identify networks of foreign suppliers and domestic importers that are responsible for smuggling fentanyl into the United States, enhancing our investigative capabilities.

HSI plays a critical role in countering narcotics trafficking by exchanging information, coordinating investigations, and facilitating enforcement actions with law enforcement partners abroad to deter the ability of TCOs to smuggle drugs, people, and contraband into and out of the United States. FY 2022 statistics reveal HSI conducted 11,535 narcotics-related criminal arrests

and seized roughly 1.87 million pounds of narcotics, which included 20,981 pounds of fentanyl. Additionally, HSI Special Agents seized more than \$210 million in total currency and assets through their narcotics enforcement efforts.

One of HSI's most significant tools to combat TCOs engaged in fentanyl trafficking domestically are the Border Enforcement Security Task Forces (BESTs). BESTs eliminate the barriers between federal and local investigations and close the gap with international partners in multinational criminal investigations. BESTs continue to be a primary vehicle used to carry out HSI's comprehensive, multi-layered strategy to address the national opioid epidemic. For example, in response to the exploitation of international shipping routes to transport illicit drugs and dual use chemicals, HSI increased the number of BEST units at international mail facilities (IMFs), express consignment hubs (ECC), and international airports that act as IMFs.

Recognizing the unprecedented epidemic of deaths from illicit opioids, HSI recently developed and began implementation of its *Strategy for Combating Illicit Opioids*. The *Strategy* builds upon many of HSI's core investigative authorities and capabilities in combating TCOs and focuses efforts on four core goals, all of which align with the National Drug Control Strategy. They are 1) reduce the international supply of illicit opioids; 2) reduce the domestic supply of illicit opioids; 3) attack the enablers of illicit opioid trafficking: illicit finance, cybercrime, and weapons smuggling; and 4) conduct outreach with private industry. Through this strategy, HSI aims to make important strides in reducing the harm illicit opioids have on U.S. communities.

One of HSI's primary international tactics in the fight against fentanyl is the Transnational Criminal Investigative Unit (TCIU) program. The TCIU Program was created to help facilitate the exchange of information between the United States and its foreign partners. This enhances the host country's ability to investigate and prosecute individuals involved in transnational criminal activities, threatening the stability and national security of the region and posing continuing threats to the homeland security of the United States. HSI TCIUs are comprised of foreign law enforcement officials, customs officers, immigration officers, and prosecutors who undergo a strict vetting process conducted by HSI to ensure that shared information and operational activities are not compromised. These units work to identify targets, collect evidence, share information, and facilitate the prosecution of TCOs both in-country, among other foreign partner nations, and through the U.S. judicial system. HSI TCIUs prioritize criminal investigations related to weapons trafficking and counter-proliferation, money laundering and bulk cash smuggling, human smuggling, human trafficking, illegal drug trafficking, intellectual property rights violations and other customs fraud, child exploitation, cybercrime, and other violations of law within HSI's investigative purview. The current HSI TCIU footprint consists of over 500 personnel assigned to 12 TCIUs and two International Task Forces in 14 countries around the world. HSI expanded the program to one additional country in FY 2023 and anticipates expanding the program further in FY 2024. Colombia and Guatemala are the two largest international TCIUs, with more than 150 vetted individuals. HSI's Strategy aims to increase training of TCIU members, focused on the methodologies surrounding chemical and pill press machinery acquisition.

HSI has also launched targeted enforcement campaigns to combat illicit narcotics, particularly fentanyl. From March 13, 2023 to May 9, 2023, CBP and HSI launched Operation

Blue Lotus to facilitate and increase fentanyl interdictions primarily at POEs and develop criminal cases along the Southwest border. Focusing operations at the ports of San Ysidro, CA, Otay Mesa, CA, and Nogales, AZ, Operation Blue Lotus aimed to curtail the flow of illicit fentanyl smuggled into the United States from Mexico, while simultaneously illuminating the TCO networks. Upon its conclusion, Operation Blue Lotus, which spanned 60 days, resulted in the seizure of more than 4,700 pounds of fentanyl, more than 4,600 pounds of methamphetamine, more than 1,050 pounds of cocaine, and more than 72 pounds of heroin, in addition to over 250 arrests by CBP and HSI.

On June 5, 2023, CBP launched Operation Artemis, the next phase in CBP's counter-synthetics strategy, leveraging intelligence derived from Operation Blue Lotus for targeted operations to counter the emerging fentanyl epidemic. The focus of Operation Artemis is to further disrupt and degrade the flow and supply chains that feed the production of fentanyl and other synthetic drugs through coordinated enforcement, investigative, interdiction and scientific identification efforts. The operation's end goal is to stem the flow of fentanyl, its precursors, and enabling paraphernalia such as pill presses and dies through strategic enforcement actions not only at the Southwest land border, but with expansion to the express consignment, IMFs, air and sea cargo environments. This six-week operation is an integrated law enforcement enterprise that utilizes personnel with specialized skill sets: CBP Officers, CBP Import Specialists, Intelligence Analysts, Chemist and Forensic Scientists from the CBP Laboratories and Scientific Services, and HSI Special Agents.

Additionally, on June 12, 2023, HSI launched Operation Blue Lotus 2.0 to build on the success from the first phase of Operation Blue Lotus by strategically leveraging its administrative, civil, and criminal law enforcement authorities. Operation Blue Lotus 2.0 will deploy 65 Special Agents and smaller numbers of support staff, such as Criminal Analysts, via temporary duty assignments to support fentanyl suppression efforts.

The United States Coast Guard (USCG) leads maritime interdictions of narcotics in the Western Hemisphere. The USCG disrupts illicit trafficking where it is most vulnerable – at sea in the transit zone, often far from U.S. shores – before bulk quantities reach the shore and are divided into small, hard-to-detect loads. The USCG is continuing to enhance cooperation with partner nations in South and Central America to combat the flow of narcotics before they reach U.S. shores. USCG intelligence personnel and Coast Guard Investigative Service Special Agents are fully integrated across the Department and at the Joint Interagency Task Force (JIATF) South, allowing for maximum counterdrug coordination across the hemisphere. These efforts directly enable target identification and development that prioritize law enforcement investigations—perpetuating the interdiction continuum, the removal of multi-ton quantities of drugs from the supply chain, and the collection of critical evidence for the prosecution of TCO members. In FY 2022, the USCG removed approximately 152 metric tons of cocaine, 60,000 pounds of marijuana, and 7.7 metric tons of other narcotics, including methamphetamines, heroin, and hashish. In addition to these drug removals, a USCG-led multi-agency effort in FY 2022 tied their maritime law enforcement operations to the indictment and extradition of a consolidated priority organizational target to Puerto Rico for prosecution.

The Department appreciates Congress extending for two years the statutory authority to establish and operate Joint Task Forces (JTFs) in the FY 2023 NDAA. JTFs provide a direct operational coordination layer to enhance the multi-faceted challenges facing DHS. Today, JTF-East is responsible for ensuring Departmental unity of effort in the southern maritime approach to the United States and demonstrates the tangible, positive impacts that JTFs can have on enhancing DHS-coordinated operations for national security, public health, and protecting the homeland.

## **Border Security and Immigration**

### *Securing the Border*

Through the Southwest Border Coordination Center, established in February 2022, DHS led a comprehensive whole-of-government planning effort for more than 18 months to prepare for the termination of the Title 42 public health Order. This effort included record deployments of personnel, infrastructure, and resources to support our frontline personnel, as well as the development of a series of policy measures intended to disincentivize unlawful entries at the land border while incentivizing migrants to use safe, orderly, and lawful processes and pathways to come to the United States. In the weeks since May 12, 2023, DHS has continued to lead a successful whole-of-government effort to ensure the safe, orderly, and humane management of our nation's borders and the continued enforcement of U.S. immigration laws.

The end of the Title 42 Order allowed DHS to fully return to processing all noncitizens under its longstanding Title 8 immigration authorities. Consequently, DHS has been able to impose significant consequences for those who are apprehended crossing the border without prior authorization, who are now subject to the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways rule on asylum eligibility. Under this rule, migrants who do not use the expanded lawful pathways and processes to come to the United States in a safe and orderly manner are subject to a rebuttable presumption of asylum ineligibility unless they meet an exception or are able to rebut the presumption.

These measures build on our broader efforts to secure and manage our borders while building a safe, orderly, and humane immigration system. In April 2022, I issued the DHS Plan for Southwest Border Security and Preparedness, laying out a six-pillar plan to manage an increase in encounters once the Title 42 public health Order was no longer in effect. DHS updated this comprehensive plan in December 2022 and continues to build upon the impact DHS has seen as a result of these efforts. Under this plan, DHS:

- Surged personnel to reinforce the more than 24,000 USBP and Office of Field Operations (OFO) personnel at the border, with approximately 1,000 law enforcement officers from across the DHS network and other federal agencies, thousands of contract personnel, 1,500 active-duty military personnel, and hundreds of volunteers from across DHS and the interagency.
- Enhanced surveillance capacity by adding 81 new autonomous surveillance towers since the start of FY 2022, for a current total of 223.



- Expanded CBP temporary holding capacity at the border by nearly 50 percent, from 13,230 in January 2021 to over 19,000 today.
- Made available several thousand detention beds in the ICE network by updating guidelines to reflect the latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidance regarding congregate settings in detention facilities.
- Increased contracted medical personnel by 75 percent since the start of FY 2022.
- Arrested nearly 14,000 smugglers and disrupted thousands of human smuggling operations, such as raiding smuggler stash houses, impounding tractor trailers that are used to smuggle migrants, and confiscating smugglers' information technology.
- The President's FY 2024 budget also requests more than \$500 million in border security technology.

We are also supporting local governments, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and faith-based organizations in border and interior cities that are receiving noncitizens in their communities. In June 2023, FEMA and CBP stood up the new Shelter and Services Program, awarding more than \$290 million to 34 non-federal entities for temporary shelter and other eligible expenditures for migrants who have been processed and provisionally released from DHS custody while awaiting the outcome of their immigration proceedings. An additional \$73 million will be made available later this summer. Since passage of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, DHS has allocated more than \$400 million to support communities receiving migrants across the country, including \$332.5 million in May 2023 and \$75 million in December 2022 under the Emergency Food and Shelter Program – Humanitarian (EFSP-H).

As a result of the Department's preparations, unlawful entries between POEs along our Southwest border have decreased by more than 50 percent compared to the peak of 10,800 prior to the lifting of Title 42. We are cognizant, however, that conditions driving unprecedented numbers of people to leave their homes and make the dangerous journey to other countries, including towards our Southwest border, are still present. Furthermore, we understand that TCOs and human smugglers will continue to spread disinformation in order to prey on the desperation of these migrants. We will not get complacent. DHS will continue to fulfill our duty to secure America's borders to the best of our ability, making adjustments to ongoing efforts as needed.

### *Expanding Lawful Pathways*

DHS has taken innovative policy steps that seek to change the calculus for intending migrants. These measures impose consequences on certain individuals who cross the border without prior authorization, while significantly expanding the availability of safe, orderly, and lawful pathways to come to the United States, to incentivize noncitizens to use such pathways without having to put their lives in the hands of smugglers. As part of these efforts, we have overseen the largest expansion of lawful pathways in decades even as we have set records for repatriations.

In order to combat sharp increases in the encounters of Venezuelan nationals from FY 2021 to FY 2022, in October 2022 DHS developed—in close coordination with the Government of Mexico—an innovative approach that provided Venezuelans with a safe, orderly way to come to the United States and imposed new consequences on those who crossed without

authorization. Through this new process, eligible individuals are able to receive advance authorization to travel to an interior POE to seek a discretionary grant of parole for a period of up to two years, on a case-by-case basis. Venezuelans who did not use this new process and were encountered at the Southwest land border could be returned to Mexico.

Building on the success of this process, in January of this year, DHS announced and implemented a similar process for Cubans, Haitians, and Nicaraguans (collectively, the CHNV processes). Nationals of these countries who do not avail themselves of this pathway and attempt to enter the United States without authorization will generally be returned to Mexico. As a result of this new process, encounters between POEs of nationals from Cuba, Haiti, and Nicaragua have declined from a daily average of 952 per day the week ending January 5, 2023—when the new process was announced—to a daily average of 25 per day the week ending July 11.

While encounters between POEs at the Southwest border have plummeted, thousands of nationals from these countries have successfully followed the process for lawful entry. The processes described above have allowed more than 155,000 individuals who have U.S.-based supporters and have passed the requisite national security and public safety vetting to travel directly to the United States. The successful use of these parole processes and the significant decrease in illegal crossing attempts clearly demonstrate that noncitizens prefer to utilize a safe, lawful, and orderly pathway to the United States if one is available, rather than putting their lives and livelihoods in the hands of ruthless smugglers. Combining accessible lawful pathways with consequences for those who fail to use those pathways works.

When it comes to expanding additional lawful pathways, we have:

- Significantly expanded the number of temporary work visas available for migrants in the region, especially in the Northern Central American (NCA) countries of El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, through the H-2A and H-2B programs. As of June 23, 2023, 19,005 H-2B visas were issued to nationals of El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Haiti. This is a 300 percent increase compared to the entire FY 2019.
- Dramatically expanded refugee resettlement in the Western Hemisphere, working in conjunction with the Department of State. We resettled 2,485 individuals in FY 2022, a 521 percent increase over FY 2021 and an eight-year high for the region. As of April 30, 2023, we have already resettled 3,443 refugees from the Western Hemisphere—a nearly 40 percent increase over the entire FY 2022, with five months left in the fiscal year. With the establishment of Safe Mobility Offices in South and Central America, we will significantly increase the number of individuals processed for refugee resettlement in the coming months and years.
- Significantly expanded capacity to process noncitizens at land POEs on the Southwest border. In particular, the CBP One mobile app, which is available for free download to a mobile device, allows individuals of any nationality in Central or Northern Mexico to schedule an appointment to present at a POE along the Southwest border in a safe and orderly manner. The advance biographic and biometric information captured by the app allows CBP to significantly streamline its processing of noncitizens once they arrive at a POE, which, in turn, has contributed to CBP's ability to increase its capacity to process inadmissible individuals at land border POEs compared to its 2014-2019 pre-pandemic

average. On June 30, CBP expanded the number of available daily appointments to 1,450 per day—almost four times the number of noncitizens processed at POEs prior to the pandemic. These individuals have presented in a safe and orderly manner at a POE each day during their scheduled appointment time. As of June 30, more than 144,000 appointments have been processed thus far at POEs along the Southwest border. This app, available in English, Spanish, and Haitian Creole, effectively cuts out the smugglers, decreases migrant exploitation, and improves safety and security in addition to making the process more efficient.

The United States cannot and should not do this work alone; hemispheric challenges require hemispheric solutions. Twenty-one countries endorsed the Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection in June of last year, affirming that it is our collective responsibility to address the factors causing irregular migration throughout our hemisphere. DHS is working closely with the Department of State and partner countries—including Mexico, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Colombia, Ecuador, and Panama—to expand efforts to humanely secure borders and remove individuals without a lawful basis to remain, counter human smuggling organizations, increase labor mobility, and expand protection and lawful pathways for intending migrants.

We are strengthening our relationships with partners in Mexico and Central and South America to ensure a holistic response to this challenge, including the following actions:

- In October 2022, DHS announced joint actions with Mexico, reinforcing our coordinated enforcement operations to target human smuggling organizations and bring them to justice. That campaign includes new migration checkpoints, additional resources and personnel, joint targeting of human smuggling organizations, and expanded information sharing related to transit nodes, hotels, stash houses, and staging locations.
- DHS officials have traveled throughout the region to strengthen partnerships with our counterparts. As Secretary, I have traveled to Mexico four times, including most recently with the President for the North American Leaders' Summit in January to discuss regional cooperation on migration, security, and other vital issues. I have visited Honduras, Guatemala, Panama, Ecuador, Colombia, and Costa Rica to advance our bilateral and regional partnerships and forge strengthened cooperation on migration management.
- We are also working with regional partners to implement the U.S. Strategy for Addressing the Root Causes of Migration and the hemispheric Los Angeles Declaration on Migration and Protection with historic U.S. Government investments, totaling nearly \$1 billion in assistance, according to the Department of State. We have also concluded bilateral arrangements with Costa Rica and Panama, agreeing to humane border security measures, support with counter-smuggling, and repatriation assistance. The United States is planning to offer additional assistance to support regional partners to address the migration challenges in the Darién.
- DHS and the Department of State are continuing to deliver on our commitments by establishing Safe Mobility Offices (SMOs) in South and Central America. In Guatemala and Costa Rica, processing through SMOs began on June 12, 2023, and shortly after on June 28, 2023, processing began in Colombia. SMOs enable eligible individuals to begin

the process of accessing protection and other lawful pathways to the United States or other partner countries, including Canada and Spain.

### *Enforcing Our Immigration Laws*

Under our immigration laws, noncitizens present in the United States can request asylum and other humanitarian protection and, if they qualify, may be granted such protection. Individuals who are not eligible for protection or other relief from removal generally are ordered removed. On May 12, 2023, after a robust regulatory process that included responding to more than 50,000 comments from the public, DHS and the Department of Justice (DOJ) began implementing the Circumvention of Lawful Pathways rule, which is designed to build on the success of the CHNV processes.

The rule is designed to cut out of the process the TCOs that prey on migrants, making migration safer and more orderly. Its provisions incentivize migrants to use the new and existing lawful processes that DHS has established and disincentivize dangerous border crossings by placing a commonsense condition on asylum eligibility for those individuals who fail to do so, and who do not otherwise qualify for an exception.

Under the rule, individuals who circumvent the expanded lawful, safe, and orderly pathways into the United States—including the CHNV processes, the significant expansion of refugee processing and temporary work visas, and the use of the CBP One mobile app to schedule a time and place to arrive at a POE—and also fail to seek protection in a country through which they traveled on their way to the United States, are subject to a rebuttable presumption of asylum ineligibility in the United States unless they meet specified exceptions. Individuals who cannot establish a valid claim to protection under the standards set out in the rule are subject to prompt removal under Title 8 authorities, which carries at least a five-year bar to admission to the United States and the potential to be criminally prosecuted for repeated unlawful entry.

DHS has made clear through these efforts that there are consequences for entering without authorization. From May 12 to July 2, 2023, DHS repatriated over 72,000 noncitizens under Title 8 authorities, including single adults and families, to more than 110 countries.

When it comes to our enforcement priorities, in September 2021 I issued guidance to focus immigration apprehension and removal on the greatest threats to the homeland, which yielded positive results. For example, while the guidance was in place and before it was vacated by a federal court, ICE arrested an average of 855 aggravated felons per month, compared to a monthly average of 687 during the four years of the prior Administration. We applaud the Supreme Court's recent ruling on immigration enforcement and DHS looks forward to reinstating the September 2021 guidelines.

### *Humanitarian Protection*

Finally, we have also responded to humanitarian crises around the world and at the same time returned to the administration of our immigration laws in a manner keeping with our nation's values by:

- Implementing a historic effort across the federal government to support vulnerable Afghans, including those who worked alongside us in Afghanistan for the past two decades, first through Operation Allies Welcome (OAW) and now continuing such support through Enduring Welcome. Afghan nationals paroled under OAW underwent an interagency screening and vetting process that began overseas and was supported by intelligence, law enforcement, and counterterrorism professionals from DHS, DOS, FBI, NCTC, and additional U.S. Government partners. The federal government is leveraging every tool available to ensure that no individuals who pose a threat to public safety or national security are permitted to enter the United States. The continuous screening and vetting process is ongoing to ensure the continued protection of public safety and national security.
- Creating Uniting for Ukraine (U4U), a lawful and orderly process to enable certain eligible Ukrainians and their immediate family members fleeing Russia's unprovoked war of aggression to apply for advance authorization to travel to the United States to seek parole for a period of up to two years. As of the end of June, over 175,000 Ukrainians have been authorized to travel to the United States through this process, which includes interagency screening and vetting both prior to authorizing travel to the United States and upon arrival at a POE. Through available lawful pathways, to include immigrant and nonimmigrant processes, over 349,000 Ukrainians have arrived in the United States since the conflict began.
- Providing Temporary Protected Status (TPS) benefits to nationals of 16 countries, including new designations, redesignations, or extensions for Afghanistan, Burma, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Haiti, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria, Ukraine, Venezuela, and Yemen. We rescinded the prior Administration's termination of TPS designations for four additional countries (El Salvador, Honduras, Nepal, and Nicaragua) and extended those designations for 18 months. In addition, President Biden announced Deferred Enforced Departure (DED) for certain Liberian nationals and Hong Kong residents.
- Restoring the historical understanding of a "public charge" ground of inadmissibility that had been in place for decades, so as not to penalize individuals for using the health benefits and supplemental government services available to them.
- Preserving and fortifying the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy through issuance of a final rule codifying the policy, working with DOJ to defend it against legal challenges, and effectively addressing significant processing backlogs inherited from the prior Administration. Despite our efforts, the program remains under threat and hundreds of thousands of Dreamers continue to live their lives from one court decision to the next, with great uncertainty.

We have also sought to ensure just outcomes through the Interagency Task Force on the Reunification of Families, which I proudly chair and which has reunited more than 745 children separated from their families at the Southwest border under the Trump Administration's Zero Tolerance policy. We also initiated the Immigrant Military Members and Veterans Initiative, improving support for noncitizen military members, including returning to the United States previously removed veterans who honorably served our nation so they can return to their families and lives here and access certain Veterans Affairs benefits to which they are entitled as a result of their service.

## Human Trafficking and Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Combating the abhorrent crimes of human trafficking and child sexual exploitation and abuse (CSEA) are top priorities for the Department. These crimes target the most vulnerable among us, offend our most basic values, and threaten our national security and public safety.

According to the United Nations' International Labor Organization, human traffickers victimize an estimated 28 million people worldwide, with 80 percent subjected to forced labor and 20 percent in sex trafficking. The United States is no exception. Many trafficking cases in the United States involve workers in agriculture, landscaping, construction, factories, in homes as nannies or other domestic workers, restaurants, elder care, and more — essentially in jobs with low pay and few legal protections in the underground economy and the service industry.

Almost every office and agency in the Department plays a role in our counter-human trafficking mission. The DHS Center for Countering Human Trafficking (CCHT), which was codified by the Countering Human Trafficking Act of 2021, coordinates the counter-trafficking efforts of 16 DHS agencies and offices, reflecting our commitment to combat this heinous crime from every angle: investigations and enforcement, intelligence, public education and prevention, policy innovation, victim protection and support, and more.

HSI and CBP are the primary DHS law enforcement entities that ensure perpetrators are held accountable. HSI leads criminal investigations into sex trafficking and forced labor, making 3,655 human trafficking-related arrests during FY 2022, an increase of more than 50 percent over the previous fiscal year. Our human trafficking investigations led to 638 convictions, an increase of more than 80 percent over the previous year.

CBP is charged with rooting out forced labor-made goods from U.S. supply chains by preventing the importation of such illicit merchandise into the United States. CBP carries out this mission by investigating allegations of forced labor in supply chains and, where allegations are corroborated, issuing Withhold Release Orders (WROs) and forced labor findings pursuant to section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930. CBP issued six WROs, two findings, and one WRO modification in FY 2022. In June 2022, CBP also began enforcing the landmark Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act (UFLPA), enacted by Congress in December 2021.<sup>1</sup> Together with the DHS Office of Strategy, Policy, and Plans, which chairs the interagency Forced Labor Enforcement Task Force (FLETF), and other interagency members including the Departments of Labor, State, Justice, Treasury, Commerce, and the United States Trade Representative, CBP led the UFLPA's successful implementation and is committed to fully enforcing this law to prevent the importation of goods produced, wholly or in part, with forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region in the PRC.

DHS employs a victim-centered approach across all missions, including the Department's programs and operations to counter human trafficking and CSEA. This approach seeks to

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<sup>1</sup> UFLPA established a rebuttable presumption that the importation of any goods, wares, articles, and merchandise mined, produced, or manufactured wholly or in part in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China, or produced by certain entities, is prohibited by Section 307 of the Tariff Act of 1930 and that such goods, wares, articles, and merchandise are not entitled to entry to the United States.

minimize additional trauma, mitigate undue penalization, and provide needed stability and support to victims. This approach is not only critical to helping survivors begin to repair their lives. It also enables law enforcement to better detect, investigate, and prosecute perpetrators. For this reason, in FY 2022, DHS expanded the HSI Victim Assistance Program (VAP), increasing the number of victim assistance personnel, including victim assistance specialists (VASs) and forensic interview specialists (FISs), by 40 percent. In FY 2023, HSI will grow the program by another 60 percent. These investments have led to increases in the identification of victims of human trafficking, referrals for social services in local communities, and forensic interviews using trauma-informed, victim-centered methods to elicit accurate and complete information while minimizing distress. The VAP assisted 3,326 victims worldwide in FY 2022, including 1,138 victims of child exploitation and 765 human trafficking victims.

Public education is also a critical component of our counter-trafficking work. To name just a few of our achievements in this mission in FY 2022, the DHS Blue Campaign, the Department's national human trafficking public awareness initiative, trained more than 215,000 federal government, NGO, law enforcement, industry, and public participants on how to recognize the indicators of human trafficking. Our Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers trained more than 3,300 law enforcement officers, representing over 90 federal law enforcement agencies, on how to recognize and respond to potential trafficking cases.

The Department is also redoubling efforts to combat online CSEA, which has increased dramatically in scope and severity in recent years. New forms of CSEA have also emerged and grown exponentially, including the live streaming of child sexual abuse and sophisticated sextortion and grooming schemes. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), the nation's clearinghouse for child sexual abuse material (CSAM), received over 32 million cyber tips in 2022, corresponding to more than 88 million images and videos of child sexual abuse—a roughly 75 percent increase in just five years. What is worse, these numbers represent only CSAM on the open web; they do not include the massive amount of child sexual abuse content produced and shared on the dark web.

In response, we are strengthening our HSI Cyber Crimes Center (C3), including the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU), a global leader in counter-CSEA law enforcement operations. The CEIU Victim Identification Program (VIP) utilizes state-of-the-art technologies combined with traditional investigative techniques to identify and rescue child victims throughout the world. Since its establishment in 2011, the VIP has identified and/or rescued more than 11,000 child victims of sexual exploitation. The CEIU also detects and apprehends producers and distributors of CSAM and perpetrators of transnational child sexual abuse, employing the latest technology to collect evidence and track the activities of individuals and organized groups who sexually exploit children via websites, chat rooms, peer-to-peer trading, and other internet-based platforms. CEIU's Operation Predator targets child sexual predators on both the open web and dark web, and in FY 2022 led to the arrest of 4,459 perpetrators for crimes involving child sexual abuse. During this same period, the CEIU Angel Watch Center issued 4,527 notifications regarding international travel by convicted child sex offenders, resulting in more than 1,073 denials of entry by foreign nations.

The DHS Science & Technology Directorate also develops and deploys leading-edge forensic tools and technologies that enable CEIU agents and other national and international law enforcement partners to identify and locate child victims of online sexual exploitation. These tools include livestream capabilities, advanced facial recognition technologies, and speech and language technologies.

We are also expanding our policy, public education, and strategic engagement infrastructure to elevate and enhance the Department's counter-CSEA capabilities. DHS remains steadfast in advancing and leveraging our full breadth of authorities and resources to end these heinous crimes, and we urge you to support our efforts to expand this critical work to fight the rapidly escalating crisis of online child sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **Conclusion**

I am grateful to this Committee for your continued support of DHS, both from a resource perspective and for the provision of key authorities that allow the Department to adapt to an ever-changing threat landscape. I look forward to our continued work together and to answering your questions.