



Homeland Security

November 14, 2023

MEMORANDUM FOR:

Bill Bratton
Co-Chair, Homeland Security Advisory Council

Jamie Gorelick
Co-Chair, Homeland Security Advisory Council

Kiran Kaur Gill
Chair, Faith Based Security Advisory Council

Elisa Villanueva Beard
Chair, Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council

CC:

Karen Tandy
Vice Chair, Homeland Security Advisory Council

Rabbi Julie Schonfeld
Vice Chair, Faith Based Security Advisory Council

Dr. Walter Bumphus
Vice Chair, Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council

FROM:

Alejandro N. Mayorka
Secretary, United States Department of Homeland Security

SUBJECT:

Multi-Council Tasking on Combating Online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

The Department of Homeland Security is fortunate to have diverse advisory bodies, including the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC), the Homeland Security Academic Partnership Council (HSAPC), and the Faith Based Security Advisory Council (FBSAC), to help address some of the most difficult challenges the Department confronts. The Councils have provided valuable advice and recommendations for DHS missions. Their inputs have guided us in, among other critical lines of effort, defending against the adversarial use of artificial intelligence (AI), improving practices in the sharing of intelligence and information, advancing technological innovation, and improving our customers' experiences.

In this year's Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, the Department reaffirmed its five enduring homeland security missions and added a new sixth mission: to combat crimes of exploitation and protect victims. Our identification of this new mission reflects the importance of supporting victims and holding perpetrators accountable. Given the advancement and dominance of digital technologies, the Department has seen a dramatic increase in the prevalence and severity of online Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (CSEA), one of the most pernicious problems facing our country.

Each of our advisory Councils brings valuable expertise and different vantage points from which to view and identify solutions to this problem. The ability to have these Councils tackle this challenge simultaneously and collaboratively has the potential for significant impact. I respectfully request that the HSAC, HSAPC, and FBSAC each form a subcommittee to review DHS efforts to combat online CSEA in accordance with the guidance below.

I request that all three Councils develop independent reports, submit their findings and key recommendations to me no later than 150 days from the date of this memorandum, consistent with applicable rules and regulations.

Child Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

New internet-connected digital tools grant offenders unprecedented access to children, allowing this borderless crime to proliferate. To offer just a few data points: the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC or the Center), which analyzes reports of child sexual abuse materials, received over 32 million cyber tips in 2022. This corresponds to more than 88 million images and videos of child sexual abuse—a roughly 75 percent increase in only five years. Similarly, between 2021 and 2022, the Center documented 80,524 reports of attempted online exploitation, an 82 percent increase over the previous year. The United States not only has an increasing number of U.S. child victims, but it also leads the world in hosting perpetrators of these crimes.

Our Department has led the law enforcement response to these abhorrent crimes. The Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) Cyber Crimes Center, home to the Child Exploitation Investigations Unit (CEIU), is a global leader in this space. In Fiscal Year 2022 alone, DHS identified or rescued 1,170 child victims and arrested 4,459 individuals for crimes involving the sexual exploitation of children.

We know we cannot investigate and arrest our way out of this epidemic. DHS is prioritizing the fight against these crimes by expanding and further investing in public education, law enforcement, and digital forensic resources to fight online CSEA. The Department's efforts will benefit from the deep expertise of the Council members. Your review will be particularly timely; the Department plans to launch a first-of-its kind, government-led public awareness campaign to counter online CSEA, "Know2Protect: Together We Can Stop Online Child Exploitation."

We urgently need to harness the advantages of AI in this work, while addressing the new vulnerabilities AI creates. The DHS AI Task Force is working on digital forensic tools to help identify, locate, and rescue real victims of online child sexual exploitation and abuse and to identify the perpetrators. At the same time, investigators around the world are beginning to see fabricated AI images of child sexual abuse material, which threatens to redirect law enforcement officials away from investigating images of real children.

Given the need to accelerate our progress in the face of this evolving threat, I ask that the HSAC, HSAPC, and FBSAC each form a subcommittee to review and provide recommendations to counter online child sexual exploitation and abuse. The subcommittees will enhance our efforts and complement our ongoing work, and should consider existing prevention frameworks and models from the public and private sectors.

The HSAC review and recommendations should include but not be limited to:

1. An assessment of how DHS can streamline and strengthen internal operations across components to effectively coordinate and collectively address online child sexual exploitation and abuse alongside our international partners, the technology industry, and non-governmental organizations.
2. An assessment and development of recommended actions for the technology industry to proactively identify, report, and prevent future sexual exploitation and abuse of children online. The assessment should include:
 - a. a review of existing authorities and how DHS could utilize these authorities to move our interests forward; and
 - b. identification of the barriers impeding industry from providing actionable information to law enforcement to identify victims and perpetrators.
3. An assessment to gauge the strengths, gaps, and opportunities in public awareness, industry engagement, and whole-of-community involvement. This assessment should include recommendations for cross-industry collaboration to raise public awareness of online CSEA.

The FBSAC review and recommendations should include but not be limited to:

1. Recommendations on how DHS can partner with faith-based organizations to inform faith-based leaders and communities about how to recognize and respond appropriately to incidents of online CSEA.
2. An assessment to gauge the strengths, gaps, and opportunities in faith-based community awareness, engagement, and whole-of-community involvement. This assessment should include recommendations for faith-based organization collaboration to raise public awareness of online CSEA.

The HSAPC review and recommendations should include but not be limited to:

1. Development of guidelines and best practices for educators and academic institutions to:
 - a. understand and reduce the risks of online CSEA;
 - b. establish processes and protocols to detect and report online CSEA; and
 - c. partner with law enforcement and support communities to aid investigations and victims.

2. An assessment of DHS educational, awareness, and school safety resources to prevent, detect, and report online CSEA. This should include best practices for content delivery, including how it is delivered, who is delivering it, and audience prioritization.