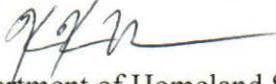




Homeland Security

May 20, 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR: Judge William Webster
Chair, Homeland Security Advisory Council

FROM: Kevin K. McAleenan 
Acting Secretary, Department of Homeland Security

SUBJECT: New Tasking for the Homeland Security Advisory Council's
Subcommittee on Faith-based Organization Security

In light of recent attacks against synagogues, churches, temples and mosques, I request you swiftly re-establish a Subcommittee under the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) focused on the security of faith-based organizations across the country. Houses of worship and faith-based nonprofit organizations dedicate resources to local communities and often serve as the social and moral beacons people rely on in times of trouble. The right to practice our respective religions free of interference or fear is one of our nation's most fundamental and indelible rights. Therefore, the targeting of houses of worship by violent extremists of any ideology is particularly abhorrent and must be prevented.

While the Department of Justice is responsible for investigating and prosecuting attacks against faith-based institutions, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) missions include preparedness, prevention, and mitigation for such attacks. In support of these missions, DHS provides information, training, exercises, and expertise on protective security measures to faith-based organizations. Despite past growth in this area, I recognize that these efforts must be strengthened and expanded, particularly in light of the changing nature of the threat and the recent uptick in attacks.

I believe this Subcommittee can assist DHS in identifying additional lines of effort needed, validating the Department's prevention framework that is under development, and examining whether the Department's capabilities need to be adjusted to account for the threat posed by domestic violent extremists. We are seeking the Subcommittee's feedback on how DHS can best support state and local governments' and faith-based organizations' efforts to keep houses of worship safe, secure, and resilient.

In addition to the HSAC members you select, the Subcommittee should include representatives of the associations that work on security-related matters for faith communities, such as the Secure Community Network, Christian Emergency Network, The Sikh Coalition or Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, the Muslim Public Affairs Council, and other

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major associations representing faith communities. The subcommittee should also consider organizations that can assist in further conveying information to faith-based communities writ large, such as the Faith-Based Information Sharing and Analysis Organization. The Subcommittee should consider building off of the work done by a prior Subcommittee on Countering Violent Extremism.

Specifically, the Subcommittee should focus their efforts on addressing the following issues:

1. Ensuring two-way information flows between DHS and faith-based organizations (e.g., Do faith-based organizations have routine access to information and assessments about domestic violent extremist movements and the threats they espouse against faith-based organizations? What additional information would be of assistance in their security efforts? Do faith-based organizations receive timely notification of specific and credible threats to their organizations?).
2. Evaluating preparedness and protective efforts for the faith community. (e.g., Do faith-based organizations have the resources and training needed to ensure protective measures are put in place and exercised on a routine basis? If not, what is the best way to close the gap? Are there additional measures beyond traditional protective efforts—such as enhanced understanding of behavioral indicators, knowing the simple steps that can be taken during an incident to increase the chances of survival, and actions that should be considered following an incident to quickly reconstitute services—that can be better conveyed to the community to enhance security in a manner that maintains the integrity of places of worship while sustaining a welcoming environment that allows for peaceful congregation?)
3. Evaluating the role the faith-community could/should have in locally-based prevention efforts. (e.g., Are there aspects of the current trend of the racially-motivated violence, which the faith community can address more effectively than the government or other parts of society?)

I look forward to reviewing the Subcommittee's strong recommendations via HSAC approval, and request an interim report from the HSAC regarding the above issues within 90 days of the Subcommittee's formation. I have directed the Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention, the Office of Intelligence and Analysis, the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to support this Subcommittee in its work. Thank you in advance for your work on these recommendations.