

U. S. Department of Homeland Security
Homeland Security Advisory Council Conference Call
Tuesday, December 17, 2019
Meeting Minutes
12:00 pm – 2:00 pm

The open session of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) meeting was convened on December 17, 2019 from 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. The meeting was open to members of the public under the provisions of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA), P.L. 92-463 and 5 U.S.C. § 552b.

The following individuals attended the meeting:

HSAC Members:

William H. Webster (Chair)
William Bratton (Vice Chair)
Steve Adegbite
John R. Allen
Thad W. Allen
Art Acevedo
Mark Dannels
Leon Fresco
Paul Goldenberg
Michael P. Jackson
Jim Jones
Cathy Lanier
Carie A. Lemack
John Magaw
Jeffrey Miller
Jeff Moss
Wendy Smith-Reeve
Robert Rose
Ali Soufan
Chad Sweet

DHS Participants:

Chad Wolf, Acting Secretary, DHS
John H. Hill, Assistant Secretary, Office of Partnership and Engagement
Matt Hayden, Executive Director, Homeland Security Advisory Council
Mike Miron, Deputy Executive Director, Homeland Security Advisory Council
Evan Hughes, Associate Director, Homeland Security Advisory Council

Operator:

Thank you everyone for joining the Homeland Security Advisory Council call. At this time, I'd like to introduce Judge William Webster. Judge Webster, sir, the Chair of the Committee, the floor is yours.

William Webster:

Thank you very much. My name is William Webster. I am the Chair of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, or HSAC, for short. I welcome you to today's public meeting where we will receive a draft report of the HSAC Subcommittee on the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Communities.

I would like to welcome our HSAC members and those of the public we have in attendance. A special thank you to the HSAC staff of Matt Hayden, Mike Miron, and Evan Hughes for their continuous support of the Council's hard work. I'd like to thank General John Allen and Paul Goldenberg for their leadership and their service as co-chairs to the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Communities Subcommittee.

I'd also like to thank HSAC member Sheriff Mark Daniels who served as a member of this subcommittee. Next, I'd like to thank the subcommittee's co-vice chairs, Mary Marr and Salam Al-Marayati, for their leadership, and all of the subcommittee members who served on this important subcommittee.

Lastly, a special thank you to Christina Gaudino, who supported the subcommittee on drafting the report. John and Paul, I look forward to hearing your presentation. Thank you.

William Bratton:

It is only just to thank with great sincerity, the members of the group that went out presenting today. As you can see from the document that was produced, an extraordinary amount of time,

energy, and effort went into the study and the recommendations. It was a great pleasure to read and I look forward to the presentation.

William Webster:

Thank you, Bill.

Matt Hayden:

At that, thank you Judge Webster and Commissioner Bratton for those remarks. I'd like to also thank the HSAC members and members of the public for joining today's call. As a reminder, we are recording today's conference call for the public record.

This meeting is convened pursuant to a notice that appeared in the Federal Register on Monday, December 2, 2019. As a way of background, the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) is a Federal Advisory Committee at the Department of Homeland Security serving as an important group of outside senior advisors to the Secretary and Department leadership.

Under the Federal Advisory Committee Act, or FACA, these meetings are open to the public. Executive summary and meeting minutes will be posted on the DHS website at www.dhs.gov and in the Public FACA database within 90 days of today's meeting.

For members of the public, if you wish to do so, you'll have a one-minute comment period after the report is briefed by the two co-chairs. For the record, we have 20 Homeland Security Advisory Council members participating in today's meeting.

Once this report is briefed, we'll take public comments, have council deliberations and then vote on the report. At this time, we will pause to see if Acting Secretary Chad Wolf is available. Let me pause for his line to see if the military has an update.

Acting Secretary Chad Wolf:

Good afternoon, and thank you for setting up the call, Matt. Thank you to the members of the HSAC and to the public and press for joining this afternoon. Judge Webster, Commissioner Bratton, Homeland Security Advisory Council and subcommittee members, thank you for your continued service on the Council, to the Department and for the nation in the work that you do.

I had an opportunity to talk with the Council several weeks ago and thank them for lending their time and talents to the Department. We are better because of their expertise. The work that you do each and every day is vitally important to the country and to the Department.

I am personally grateful for, again, what you do for DHS, as we set to address some of the most complex Homeland Security challenges that the Department has faced in its brief tenure. I'd like to especially thank the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Communities leadership team, John Allen and Paul Goldenberg. Also thank you to Marayati and Mary Marr, along with the subcommittee members, for all the hours that you put into the final draft report that you're presenting.

I did have the opportunity to spend some time with the subcommittee in Jackson, Mississippi back in August, along with the Acting Secretary of the Department, Chairman Bennie Thompson, and a number of local law enforcement faith-based leaders. It was a good conversation that we certainly took back to the Department.

In September, the Department issued a strategic framework for countering terrorism and targeted violence, in which we deal with the issue of harm towards faith-based institutions. I certainly look forward to digesting the final recommendations and seeing how we can incorporate them into our overall framework and our implementation plan that we are putting together.

I will want to take a minute to mention that, just last week, we did see tragedy unfold again at a New Jersey Kosher market where gunmen opened fire and unfortunately killed four individuals, the latest example of targeted violence against our faith-based communities. DHS is continuing

to support the investigations into that tragedy with local law enforcement and our federal law enforcement.

I look forward to reviewing the report identifying the recommendations to put into action at the Department to address this issue. It's vitally important and is at the top of my radar. We need to make sure that the Department is not only properly resourced, but also that we have the right policy plans and procedures in place to address this issue.

Again, I want to thank everyone for their time, attention, and the support that you give to the Department every day. We could not do our mission or our job without you, members of the HSAC and the likes. So again, a grateful thank you from me for what you do.

With that, let me turn it back over to Matt Hayden and we'll continue on.

Matt Hayden:

Thank you very much, sir. At this time, I want to ask General Paul Allen and Paul Goldenberg, the co-chairs of the Subcommittee on the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Communities, to address their recommendations. Sirs, the floor is yours.

John Allen:

Thanks to the Acting Secretary for his intervention and leadership at this particular moment in the Department, and we all feel it. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. I'm John Allen. I was co-chair of the subcommittee.

Let me first offer my deepest respects to Council Chair Judge Webster and to Vice-Chair Commissioner Bratton. Let me thank you, Matt, the Executive Director of the HSAC, for your leadership and your support during the period of the work of our subcommittee.

Today, the HSAC Subcommittee on the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based organizations presents the findings of its draft report of the same title. We'll brief some key findings and recommendations and then we'll be prepared to take questions or engage in discussion.

In response to an initial tasking letter in Appendix 1 of the draft report, the HSAC formed this subcommittee, which included a number of subject-matter experts as well as faith leaders and advocates from key faith-based organizations. Their biographies are in Appendix 2.

All of the members provided immeasurably valuable advice and counsel as they work through the details, as did Co-Chair of the subcommittee Paul Goldenberg, whom I will mention later. And the Co-vice Chairs Mary Marr, the Founder and President of the Christian Emergency Network and Salam Al-Marayati, Founder and President of the Muslim Public Affairs Council, provided important input and leadership throughout. We could not have done this without them.

It's important to emphasize that while these were faith leaders and they were involved in the formulation of this report, the conduct and the contents of this report are secular. In other words, this report is not about faith, it's about protecting people of faith, their houses of worship and their communities.

We were busy during this period of our study and we followed the good work of two earlier, similarly constituted HSAC subcommittees in 2012 and 2014, which reported previously on many of these issues. Indeed, our work found significant overlap with these reports provided in Appendix 3, and where appropriate, we reaffirmed previous findings and recommendations from those reports in the draft report submitted today.

We could find no evidence that any other recommendations of those reports have been acted upon. This generated one of our specific conclusions on the disposition of this report, which I'll

mention in my concluding remarks. The draft report being submitted today follows the tasking letter of then-Acting Secretary McAleenan, who requested we examine three areas for tasking.

Tasking 1 was ensuring two-way information flows between the Department of Homeland Security, which I'll call DHS, and faith-based organizations communities. Tasking 2 was evaluating preparedness and protective measures and efforts for the faith community. And Tasking 3 was evaluating the role that the faith community could and should have in locally-based prevention efforts.

A fourth tasking was added by the then-Acting Secretary following a public hearing in Jackson, Mississippi chaired by Congressman Bennie Thompson, who is the Chair of the House Committee on Homeland Security. This last tasking reads, Tasking 4: to evaluate the adverse impacts that violent extremists and domestic terrorists including those inspired by violent white supremacy ideologies have on faith-based and other vulnerable communities.

Let me add that roughly halfway through our research, Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan traveled to the Brookings Institution on the 20th of September to unveil the Department's strategic framework for countering terrorism and targeted violence, which is also in Appendix 3.

Now, drawing on this document, the subcommittee's recommendations are intended to advance the goals set forth in the strategic framework. The document also made it very clear that while there are still significant sources of foreign terrorism against which we must guard, the principal source of domestic terror has been increasingly coming from violence and white supremacist movements. These movements are a direct threat to our American faith communities.

Our work was significantly aided by the advice and counsel of at least 20 subject-matter experts, witnesses representing offices, and entities from across the Department and the broader U.S. government, including the Department of Justice, the FBI, the U.S. Secret Service and others.

Without exception, we found these leaders to be dedicated and committed to their respective missions and extremely knowledgeable. They were knowledgeable about their roles with respect to faith communities and were extremely helpful in aiding us and understanding the extent of the challenges we face.

Our research has also included visits by some or all of the subcommittee members to multiple locations around the country in Montana, Louisiana, Mississippi, Minnesota, California and Wisconsin, where faith-based organizations and communities had either experienced a direct attack on the congregation and/or the house of worship or the community had experienced significant intimidation by white supremacist elements.

We also visited two sites in Utah and in New Jersey, where the measures taken for security of the faith-based communities were significant and worthy of emulation. Location of these visits and the resulting notes are in dependencies 4 and 5.

The communities we visited represented congregations from Black Christian churches in the South burned to the ground, vicious murders, fire bombing attacks and shootings targeted against Jewish, Muslim and Sikh communities. At these locations, our subcommittee members had the opportunity to meet with and to interview hundreds of faith-based community members who had experienced frequently fatal attacks or the damage or the destruction of their houses of worship.

This experience was for us at once, most heart-wrenching because the trauma and tragedy meted out to these innocent worshippers in their communities by cold-blooded attackers.

Uplifting is the courage and the resilience displayed by these communities who seek to bind up their wounds and carry on. Bind up their wounds and carry on are my words, easily spoken, but these words could never adequately express what these good people have experienced and the losses that they have endured.

My own experience in combat with units that sustained serious casualties have been that they're traumatized forever and it's nearly impossible to move on. But these communities have no choice and they're seeking to move on. It is their nobility in these moments of tragedy, trauma, destruction, and fear that motivated us to do this work and create the sense of urgency behind the submission of this draft report.

To that, and along with other members of the subcommittee, I had one of the singular honors of my life in meeting in Jackson, Mississippi with the Mississippi Baptist Convention, hosted by Dr. Isaac Jackson, President of the Convention. We met at Blacks Chapel Baptist Church in Jackson, led by Pastor John McNeal.

Under the leadership of Dr. Jackson, we met with nearly 100 leaders of the Black Christian community in Jackson and from around the state of Mississippi. They deal with deep-seated racism in their daily lives. But they also deal with real effects of fear and sometimes terror from white supremacist elements that exists in their very midst.

They spoke powerfully about their commitment to defending their houses of worship and their communities. But they had not lost faith in their ability to affect change through elections and at the ballot box. This was as admirable a group of people as I've ever met. And I'm forever changed and forever committed to them. Everyone likes them regardless of religion, by virtue of their faith and their grace, and their capacity to forgive. But also, for their fierce intent to defend themselves within the rule of law.

The exact same praise could be offered for the other faith-based communities with whom we met, who are seeking to worship peacefully and with security in their mosques, synagogues, temples, and churches. They are noble people, courageous and people of their faiths, and are some of the finest American patriots I've ever known.

The tradition of the separation of church and state has served well the United States and its people. The American secular democracy has grown into maturity alongside a diverse and vibrant faith-based community. While separate, they were in many ways complementary of each other, underwriting both a commitment to the principles of the American Constitution and to the spiritual strength of American citizenry and its society.

The framers of our Constitution had it exactly right. America would be a haven for all faiths under the sun. Many eventually emerging from those huddled masses yearning to be free, welcomed by our precious Lady Liberty. And our framers envisaged that these faith communities will be free to worship in their own manner and that they will be secure in their houses of worship.

But that security has been and is eroding, and the threats and the violence and the destruction directed against some of our faith communities is on the rise, much of it from white supremacists and other violent extremists. We'll discuss this more fully as Paul and I read the principal findings and the recommendations in some of our conclusions.

But before I turn the briefing over to Paul Goldenberg, our co-chair, let me recognize several people without whom we could not have issued this report. Mike Miron, the Deputy Executive Director of the HSAC, Evan Hughes, the Associate Director of the HSAC, and Christina Gaudino, a senior at Rutgers University, who volunteered for this project and likely regrets it. They and other HSAC support staff including Kira Cincotta and Cassie Popplewell played enormously important role in producing this report.

And let me offer Paul Goldenberg the opportunity for his comments now. But before I do, let me say on the matter of addressing this report that Paul is one of the most knowledgeable individual law enforcement and prosecutorial officials with whom it has been my privilege to serve, from the most sensitive and dangerous ground level police operations to some of the most senior positions in justice at the state of New Jersey.

There are a few who seen more and done more in this arena, covered in the substance of this report, than Paul Goldenberg. He was the perfect co-chair. And Paul, let me turn it over to you for your remarks. I'll take it back from you when you're done. Paul?

Paul Goldenberg:

General, thank you so much for those comments. They do mean a lot particularly concerning this extremely sensitive and critical tasking that was put forward to us.

I too would like to also thank Acting Secretary Chad Wolf, who for months, prior to his current appointment as Acting Secretary and then as a Senior Member of DHS, frequently offered his encouragement and support for this tasking. And notably had a keen understanding of the complexity of each mission.

Likewise, and as you've heard, to the General and others in the compassionate and dedicated HSAC team: Matt Hayden, Michael Miron, Evan Hughes. You are the unsung champions that worked after hours and weekends, who continuously demonstrate unconditional support. And you also heard about Christina Gaudino from Rutgers University, who worked nonstop and traveled with us to ensure that we stayed on mark with this report.

Ladies and gentlemen, I also remain most honored to be a member of the Secretary's Homeland Security Advisory Council and I want to also recognize HSAC Chair and Co-chair, former CIA and FBI Director Judge William Webster and former NYPD Police Commissioner William Bratton for their unwavering leadership.

It was an extraordinary privilege for me to serve alongside one of America's most distinguished and respected leaders, General Allen. Candidly, I've been around for a long time and it has been a privilege and an honor sir to work with you.

Your commitment to this effort has been unwavering. Your leadership is exceptional and you are someone who has seen much in the field. I know personally how committed are to this issue. Lastly, countless thanks to the dedicated men and women who serve on the subcommittee, our Co-chairs and devoted leaders Mary Marr and Salam Al-Marayati.

While you labored on this tasking, you still continue to serve your communities with a conviction that reconciles, not divides. In your good works, you sought to alleviate discomfort, not cause it. You serve, not dominate. And now you find yourselves taking on a newfound responsibility as guardians of your flock.

You heard that on May 20, 2019, then-Acting Secretary Kevin McAleenan tasked the Homeland Security Advisory Council to examine, considering the recent attacks against synagogues, churches, temples and mosques, the security of faith-based organizations across the country.

Our subcommittee was tasked to provide findings and recommendations on how we could best support state and local governments, faith-based organizations and work more closely with the federal government.

In addition to meeting, as you have heard, and speaking with dozens of experts, government officials, community groups, what really is quite remarkable here is that our members of the subcommittee took to the field, visiting the synagogues, the mosques, the temples, the churches, and meeting with the communities impacted by the targeted violence attacks committed by these violent extremists.

As someone who has proudly served as a member of the law enforcement community in this great nation, I have personally come to recognize that our nation's faith-based communities are one of the few institutions that have the resources and the will to bring together all age groups.

People with contrasting political opinions, races and religions can unite communities from a variety of backgrounds and interests, offering a range of competencies not often found in any single organization, police force or government agency.

They have the fundamentals to empower people, developing a sense of ownership among our whole community. Nonetheless and most unfortunate, we're here today because a growing number of bad actors have opted to set their sights on the very soul and heart of America: our communities of faith.

The question of whether the faith-based community is targeted by hatred and terror is not up for debate. Houses of worship here and abroad remain targets. Tripwires around the world can trigger an attack. Global conflict serves to put the entire religious community on alert.

In this country, both law enforcement and communities of faith recognize this unique reality and are taking proactive steps to link the mission of the Department of Homeland Security and the nation's million-plus first responders with the direct concerns of faith-based institutions. That's what makes us quite remarkable here in the United States.

As a way of background, I'm affiliated currently with Rutgers University Miller Center for Community Protection & Resilience as a Senior Fellow. I mention that because in that capacity, I have the distinct opportunity to travel the European continent, participating in programs dedicated to building communities of trust between police and the citizens.

In recent years, I have personally witnessed an abysmal transition taking place throughout the European landscape. Today, across Europe, and in countless houses of worship, they are now surrounded by crack military troops, standing guard with automatic weapons and reinforced by heavy armored personnel carriers and guard towers, who augment the one stately and welcoming entryways. Flower beds swapped for barbed wire at a cost of hundreds of millions of Euros, producing a dreadful impact on the psyche of Europe's people.

So, ladies and gentlemen, Europe has become quite literally America's canary and mime. Can it happen here? We have seen just last week, as was noted by Acting Secretary Wolf in Jersey City, recent reports indicate that the shooters assaulting the Kosher shop may very well have been seeking to kill the children attending an adjacent Jewish religious school.

During the last few months, churches, mosques, temples, synagogues have been attacked by heavily armed extremists executing military style tactics, bent on killing, attacking and terrorizing people of faith while praying within safe sanctuary. This was inconceivable just a few years ago.

The primary inspiration behind many of these targeted violence attacks is to force us to not merely question our fundamental safety and security, as well as our ability to protect our nation, neighborhoods and families, but quite frankly it's to change our behavior. Success in the eyes of these violent extremists and terrorists comes when we retract from our daily routines or way of living and even spiritual and political beliefs.

One underestimates the power of fear at his or own risk. The effects of extremist manifesto threats and plans for violent actions are now routinely shared on social media sites, such as 4chan, 8chan, just a few. And these efforts are strategically calculated on the part of these bad actors and can and will have a long lasting and deeply destructive effect on all of our lives and in all of our communities.

We've come to learn that the goal of these violent extremists is not often to just cause loss of life, more perilously though, it's to psychologically, emotionally and spiritually damage the American psyche, causing endurance, determination and morality to decay and ultimately disappear.

As attacks perpetrated from white supremacist actors continue, other similar separatists and violent extremist movements and groups grow in numbers, we should be concerned that the

adverse public reaction may generate something that these violent extremists could never have achieved on their own.

This complex psychological progression becomes an enabling tool for those who seek to derail our way of life. Subsequently, we must actively work to ensure that their insidious goals are not realized. Citizens that immunize against the psychological influence of targeted violence and terrorism have a greater ability to resist such manipulation.

If these violent extremists believe that their assault on our communities of faith are not likely to create mass chaos, fear and a subsequent unraveling of the very values of our people to the extent that it damages the bond between government and our citizenry, they very well may have less reason to waste their resources on such an attack.

If our faith communities and workforces are provided resiliency and preparedness training, are convinced that the measures they take in preparation will increase the odds of their own survival, and are successfully coping with catastrophic events. then we are all more likely to internalize personal preparedness as an absolute necessity rather than a commodity.

Faith-based and non-government organizations extend far beyond faith, spiritual care, and health and human services. They are a critical component of a collective and cooperative Homeland Security effort. Faith-based and non-governmental organizations provide direct support and response to our nation's worst natural and man-made disasters. They provide everyday vital services to tens of millions of Americans, but these faith-based and non-governmental organizations continue to be vulnerable to attacks.

These include vast networks of organizations and operations with facilities, capabilities and processes on a massive scale that need to be more integrated into a preventive and preparedness Homeland Security effort. During times of crisis and other Homeland Security events, it's the neighborhood congregation, the outreach centers, the social service agencies, the clergy and

other community organizations that need these vital resources, for these institutions are the very fabric of America.

They are best positioned to become critical partners in local and national Homeland Security initiatives. In closing, our subcommittee members all received, I believe, one consistent message and all heard the same thing. The American faith-based community stands quite ready to contribute and partner with the United States Department of Homeland Security and/or other national security agencies and the one million-plus first responder communities across this country. I conclude there, General.

John Allen:

Paul, thank you very much. What we'd like to do now is to review the executive summary items. While each of the four taskings that we were originally given produced multiple findings and recommendations with substantial detail and backup information, time doesn't permit us today to review all of the findings and recommendations that have emerged in this draft 2019 report.

Paul and I will address those seven recommendations that are on the executive summary. As is always the case, after months of research and writing, distilling any 40-page document of findings, the recommendations are tailored into a manageable executive summary of the challenge.

Beyond those seven recommendations and findings, there's a rich assembly of information in this report, which we believe will help the Acting Secretary in the Department in the mission of Preventing Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Organizations and communities. From the seven findings and recommendations, I'll brief the first three. Paul will brief the final four. Then I'll close with some concluding remarks and reflections that were contained in the conclusion of our report.

The first of the seven recommendations is that a central point of contact in the Department of Homeland Security be established for faith-based organizations. The finding is that central point be designated within DHS for matters associated with the security of faith-based organizations. As background, in now three similar reports, subcommittees have determined that the responsibilities of DHS offices for faith-based communities are distributed across the Department with no single point of entry or exit for matters associated with or related to the faith community.

In 2014, a prior HSAC subcommittee similarly recommended that “the Department of Homeland Security should designate a single point of contact between DHS and faith-based organizations for security related issues.”

This recommendation was also made in the 2012 report and we’ve reaffirmed it in the 2019 report that you have before you. Every site we visited highlighted the need for such a point of contact within DHS to reduce confusion. The designation of a single point of contact is perhaps the single most important recommendation that we’ll make.

The absence of such a point of contact had prevented a coherent, internal Departmental approach to these matters and a coherent external connectivity into the faith-based communities. So, our recommendations are twofold. First, DHS should designate a position of director at the level of assistant secretary who will oversee and lead all of the Departments’ faith-based programs and represents the Department within the inter-agency.

And secondly, that DHS recommends to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, also known as the National Security Advisor, the creation of a faith-based working group dedicated to securing houses of worship to be convened at the NSC to support policy formulation within the inter-agency and across the federal government.

A second recommendation is the proactive training for faith-based communities. The finding is that there is no consistent approach for preparing and training faith-based organizations or communities for the security that they need to adopt.

As background, in 2012 the HSAC subcommittee recommended that “DHS to provide a comprehensive security response to faith-based organizations such as providing the support for and the training necessary for infrastructure resilience assessments for houses of worship and information on significant events and cyber security.”

Significant efforts have been underway in the Department and that in itself deserves a lot of credit. However, a coherent comprehensive approach is still necessary. So, the subcommittee reaffirms this finding and the recommendation that DHS leads the initiative, in conjunction with state and local officials, of establishing a package approach to the security of faith-based organizations.

What we mean by a package approach was that the needs of faith communities are actually very similar, regardless of the particular faith or the geographic location, and typically include measures to be taken in preparation, in protection, and in response.

Having a ready package on the shelf for preparation and training, ready to be deployed for any faith community can be of enormous assistance and of course, packages can then be tailored to fit the specific needs of the community or the geographic location.

The third recommendation is for there to be faith-based coordination with the law enforcement. The finding is that the relationships between state and local law enforcement and faith-based communities are very unlevel across the country, especially outside urban areas.

As background in municipalities, these relationships were typically much closer in rural areas than in rural areas where county police and sheriff departments are stretched across major areas of the countryside. These relationships are very difficult to establish and maintain.

Faith-based organizations suffered a lack of attention in terms of security, assessment, preparations and training, particularly in the rural areas. In our research, we found that houses of worship more frequently build positive relationships with local law enforcement, while mistrust, sometimes of federal personnel and lack of government outreach, often hinder faith-based engagement with federal entities.

This is not an indictment of federal entities or personnel. They're just farther away in many ways than our state and local police. In Jackson, Mississippi for example, their police chief is a local community member and a number of the officers in their police department are representatives of the communities' demographics and attend local places of worship.

In Whitefish, Montana, one of the local police officers grew up in the town and understood and identified with the community. Individuals frequently felt far more comfortable going to him with concerns and problems than perhaps others in that police department, where we found faith-based organizations and communities with active law enforcement and community liaison activities.

We found faith-based communities well-prepared for emergencies. Faith-based organizations and communities should engage in regular dialogue with local law enforcement to discuss current and developing threats. Local police and other first responders, such as fire and rescue, must be familiar with the places of worship in their communities.

Our recommendations are twofold. DHS should encourage faith-based organizations, through state and local officials, to work closely with the local police and first responder communities to develop real time information sharing systems.

With DHS working with state and local officials, they should provide local law enforcement and local law enforcement officials with additional earmark funding to create or to expand outreach and connectivity with faith-based organizations, especially in rural areas.

If we heard one thing over and over again when we spoke with state and local law enforcement, it was that they wanted to do more. They felt they needed to do more and the faith-based communities wanted them to do more. But frankly, it was almost always an issue of resources and never an issue of enthusiasm.

Let me now turn it over to Paul who can brief the final four recommendations. Paul, over to you please.

Paul Goldenberg:

Yes, thank you General. During the next recommendation, I'm going to use the term PSA, or Protective Security Advisors.

The Protective Security Advisors are headed up and they mostly work through a division called the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency under Brian Harrell. Him and I don't use this term too loosely, but they are our unsung heroes out there. They are the hundred-plus faces of the United States Department of Homeland Security.

Many of them work out of their trunks of their cars, and if there is a major event going on somewhere in the United States and in one of the 50 states, you can pretty much rest assured that these Protective Security Advisors are on the way to offer their help.

They are remarkable, remarkable people. They are the most dedicated people I have seen and almost every one of them have been carefully selected because of no reason other than the expertise that they have.

In most cases, the respect that local state law enforcement has for them is immense. Our Protective Security Advisors have an extremely important role. It's a role that not only - as I stated before - became a face for faith-based clergy, but it's a representation for all others that are responsible for protecting infrastructure within their jurisdictions.

So, we sincerely believe that these positions need to be enhanced. The program is one of the strongest partnerships in the Department and it really plays a pivotal role. To continue to do these good works, we need many more of them in the field.

In addition to enhancing their numbers, we also believe that there should be additional training, particularly as it relates to understanding the threats and vulnerabilities of faith-based institutions, not that they haven't gone through these trainings in the past.

But we probably should have it more formalized going forward because this really is an infrastructure that has become much more vulnerable. Concerning the human beings that are within those infrastructures, we have lost too many lives in the past 12 to 18 months. That is an extremely important recommendation for us.

The next and fifth recommendation is a fusion center outreach to faith-based organizations. There are many people within the law enforcement community that know what a fusion center is, but there are even more that work on the private sector side that really have no idea what fusion centers do and there's also a mystery to what the services these institutions provide.

They were established in a post-9/11 world. Most of them do tremendous work out there, aggregating and sharing information as well as providing resources to their community. What we have found is that they are not well known, they are not understood, and they are not standardized across the country. What we really would like to see is for the fusion centers receive additional attention as well.

Some of the recommendations are for DHS to work with state and local officials to ensure that the fusion centers receive the same level of training and are similarly organized around the guiding principle, particularly as it relates to proactive outreach.

We know that there are many that do exemplary work in outreaching to houses of worship, and unfortunately, others are focused on other issues. It is probably a good time for us to provide the resources and the training so they better understand the vulnerabilities of faith-based institutions.

DHS, with state and local agencies, need to reinforce the expectation that fusion centers and the PSAs are considered a team and their work linked together. We feel that's extremely important. We have seen many fusion centers where this is in fact operational. We believe that this is something that needs to be more so replicated around the country.

We believe that there should be an evaluation of the fusion centers to determine their effectiveness in promoting FBO or faith-based security. We can call it an assessment or a gap analysis, and from that gap analysis identify needs for improvement.

Again, we're focused on the building of capacity and trust and relationships between the fusion centers and demystifying the fusion centers so faith-based communities can better understand and better leverage the tremendous resources that come from any of these institutions across the country.

Also, DHS should demonstrate transparency and the procedures and guidelines of the fusion centers in order to guarantee the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties for FBOs and their communities. We know that this is something that is front and center for the fusion centers out there.

But we also know that the CRCL, an office inside Homeland Security, is feverously working to develop trainings and other resources for a better collaboration. We'd like to see their resources better leveraged as well.

Let's move to number six, defining the domestic terrorism threat. Members of law enforcement had cited the absence of a domestic terrorism statute as hampering their efforts in some cases to track and prosecute domestic terrorism groups.

Our recommendation at this point is that this is a very fluid subject. Seeing that Congress is working with DHS and the Department of Justice on this matter, we encourage cooperation between federal, state, local, and tribal, which is known as SLTT law enforcement, to better monitor, understand, investigate and prosecute these domestic acts of terrorism through intelligence sharing requirements.

I stress that through intelligence sharing requirements and Congressional collaboration with DHS and DOJ, we should explore passing of statutes that allocate resources to combat those that are acting as domestic terrorists based on monitoring investigation and prosecution of these bad actors.

Recommendation number seven, the Federal Emergency Management Agency provides grants in many cases. Ladies and gentlemen, these grants have become a literal lifeline. I had the privilege and opportunity to see these grants in action.

They are helping out there, they are helping the small and the medium institutions. They are giving them an opportunity to provide technology and in some cases, training to their institutions where there was none. An excellent model for this purpose is the newly created Office of Targeted Violence and Counterterrorism.

We would like to see more resources implemented into the FEMA non-profit security grant. We know it's a vital source for funding. It's been used to bolster the security of non-profit organizations, but even to this day, the funding level, and I know it was just increased, is insufficient. The application process remains very, very complex, opaque, and long.

We know that there are many good reasons for these processes, but we believe that they can be streamlined with some additional help.

Our recommendations are to seek additional funding from Congress to provide an increase of secured grant money for the faith-based communities and establish an office dedicated to assisting applicants, particularly from small or poorly staffed FBOs.

In some cases, the single member of clergy does it all. So, what we want to do is provide some assistance to these smaller and poorly staffed FBOs to better navigate the complexities of applying for the grant.

The grant process can sometimes be intimidating to individuals that have no experience at all, the only reason being that they have not had any access to this process and that also needs to be somewhat demystified.

To avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the Office of Grant Application Assistance we believe should be separate from any of the grant-awarding arms of DHS and staff and should play no role in reviewing or awarding those grants.

We are also recommending that the new director position the General mentioned earlier should assume responsibility, if possible, for the Non-Profit Security Grant program.

And that's it for me, General, and thank you for the opportunity to share those recommendations with you.

John Allen:

Good, Paul. Thank you very much. Let me just emphasize something that Paul said.

There has been good work as of late between the Department and Congress on identifying resources. Congress has been a willing partner and supporter in this process. The dialogue on the grant process needs to continue as we refine what those requirements are as we go forward.

We know that Congress is very supportive in this regard and we look forward to continuing with the Department to find to those requirements for the assessments that we need.

Let me make some concluding remarks which enlarged the measures that are reflected in the final section of our draft report. Several different points.

The first point is lexicons. Creating an organizational, institutional coherence and unity of effort and action are essential in the defense of our faith-based communities. That coherence can be best supported if all parties have a common lexicon of terms and definitions.

Differences in the lexicon to the various entities, agencies and NGOs have in fact created disagreements from time to time and/or gaps in understanding the nature of actions that should be taken or even the threats.

Working to create a common lexicon strengthens preparations, protections, and combined actions in support of and on the behalf of the faith-based communities and/organizations.

In regard to plan implementation, as I mentioned at the top of the briefing, this report finds significant duplication with similar reports that were tasked to the subcommittees of the HSAC in 2012 and 2014.

We inquired as to the status and the outcomes of the recommendations of these reports and for us, the subcommittee, as we were constituted, while we've offered new and unique recommendations that recognize organizational and technological change since 2014. We found substantial overlap with previous work where we then reaffirmed that previous recommendation.

From our perspective, this report is not rendered expeditiously into an implementation plan of, as the Acting Secretary said, those recommendations that can be.

With the requirement that the Department periodically report implementation actions to Congress in consultation, then there's a good chance that this 2019 report will join the 2012 and the 2014 reports on the show.

Concerning technological opportunities and solutions, we have concluded that the Department can play an important role, along with local and state governments and law enforcement entities, in spreading the word on the value of technology in protecting faith-based organizations and communities.

In our conversations with these communities, we often found a low level of awareness as to the existence of these technologies. And if they knew about them at all, they didn't know how to procure, install, or maintain them.

Of course, this has covered to some extent through the grant awareness program that Paul talked about. They will also be covered by a unity of effort within the Department as well. Beyond the sensor packages, we also found a low level of understanding for the creation of or participation in web-based networks and platforms that can link the surveillance data from individual houses of worship to local police and other first responders.

We've also concluded that there have been important trends in big data analytics out of social media and/or artificial intelligence that can provide highly focused intelligence and threat analysis and warning.

In some cases, providing this capacity for real-time autonomous warning technology to faith-based organizations substantially accelerates the speed with which faith-based communities can be warned and prepared and first responders can react.

Several new companies and non-profit organizations are using AI to comb through masses of information and define specific potential threat streams. Given the speed of this kind of collection and analysis coupled with web-based information networks, warning speeds for faith-based organizations and communities can be enormously accelerated.

We encourage the Department to explore the state of this technology as other intelligence-based organizations are beginning to embrace AI-powered intelligence analysis. Warnings will assist in reducing the impacts on civil society and the faith-based organizations.

The former Acting Secretary specifically charged the subcommittees with examining issues associated with white supremacy, including white supremacist extremist movements and domestic terror.

We concluded that white supremacy and white supremacist extremist movements that espouse violent ideologies of terrorism towards segments of the American population are a direct threat to the national security of the United States.

We further concluded that while more remains to be determined, there are sufficient indications of international and domestic white supremacist links. The U.S. intelligence community should be tasked with collection, analysis, and production responsibilities in this regard.

Specifically, the intelligence community should examine the potential international links to establish known linkages between foreign and domestic violent ideologies, terrorists, and terrorism.

And finally, trust. The broader purpose of our subcommittee was to provide a framework for building trust between faith-based communities and/organizations, the government, and law enforcement at all levels.

We as a free society can fortify an environment of enhanced cooperation between our citizenry and our government when we serve the needs of communities, especially those who feel vulnerable to targeted violence against their houses of worship.

Faith-based organizations and communities contained sacred spaces for many and are invaluable in representing American values to our country and to the rest of the world. We must defend the houses of worship with might and wisdom as a matter of primary and fundamental American interests.

Indeed, building trust and confidence between and among our faith-based communities and government and law enforcement is in fact a vital national interest.

We hope that faith-based communities can strengthen their ties with one another and bind themselves to the government and law enforcement to that ultimate objective.

Chairman Webster and Vice Chairman Bratton, this concludes our remarks on the report. We are ready for questions and discussion. Thank you.

Matt Hayden:

Thank you very much, gentlemen. This again is Matt Hayden. I'd like to now open up the meeting for public comment. Comments will be limited to one minute each. Your comments

will be reflected in today's meeting minutes. Operator, can you please prompt the members of the public to determine if there are any public comments.

Operator:

Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, if you'd like to register a question or a comment, please press 1, 4 on your telephone keypad. You will hear a three tone-prompt to acknowledge your request. Once again, for comments or questions, please press 1, 4 on your telephone keypad. Now, one moment for the first question or comment. As a reminder for comment, please press 1, 4 on your telephone keypad. One moment. And we do not have any questions or comments at this time, sir.

Matt Hayden:

Thank you very much. This concludes our public comment period. Thank you, members of the public. I'll turn this back over to Judge Webster. Judge Webster?

William Webster:

I would like to thank John and Paul. Thanks, John, Paul and all the subcommittee members for their excellent work. I now will open it up to members of the HSAC for comments on the report.

Matt Hayden:

And at this time, we'll pause and if there are any Homeland Security Advisory Council members that have comments please address them. I'll ask one more time, if there's any Homeland Security Advisory Council members that have any comments to add? All right, back to you Judge Webster.

All right. There's no more discussion. Is there a motion for the HSAC to approve the final draft report to the Secretary?

Steve Agdebite:

So I moved.

Matt Hayden:

Okay. And seconded?

Jeff Miller:

Seconded.

Matt Hayden:

Thank you. At this time, all those in favor of approving the recommendations please indicate Aye.

(Group): Aye.

Matt Hayden:

All those opposed, please indicate Nay. Hearing none, if there's any that are choosing for abstaining? Thank you very much. This report is now approved. For the record, the recommendations passed by acclamation. Members of the public who would like to provide questions or additional comments and include media may do so via the email hsac@hq.dhs.gov.

HSAC information and meeting minutes may be found at www.dhs.gov/hsac. Judge Webster, I now yield for you to close the session.

William Webster:

Thank you again to our subcommittee chairs, John Allen and Paul Goldenberg, for your leadership and the subcommittees' great work. I want to thank the HSAC members and members of the public who are attending today's call and give special thanks to Matt, Mike, Kevin for organizing today's meeting. We are now going to bring this public session to a close. The meeting is now adjourned. Thank you. END

I hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing minutes are accurate and complete.

Judge Webster signed document on February 12, 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William H. Webster". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "W" and a long, sweeping tail.

Signed and Dated *Feb 12 2020*

Judge William H. Webster, Chairman, Homeland Security Advisory Council