

**Statement of Jonathan E. Meyer
Deputy General Counsel
Department of Homeland Security**

**Before the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
United States House of Representatives**

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Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Cummings, Distinguished Members of the Committee:

I am honored to appear before you today representing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to discuss the considerable efforts DHS devotes to complying with oversight requests by this Committee, and by the United States Congress generally. My name is Jonathan Meyer, and I serve as Deputy General Counsel at DHS. I have devoted the bulk of my career to public service, and have had the honor to work in both chambers of Congress, for Members on both sides of the aisle, as well as in positions in the Executive Branch as both a career and political appointee. I consider it a high privilege to have done so, and the varied experience I have accumulated informs my daily work on behalf of the American people. As Deputy General Counsel, I oversee DHS attorneys who are responsible for litigation, regulations, and legislation that is handled by the Office of General Counsel, and I supervise attorneys providing advice to the many components, offices and directorates at DHS. More relevant to today's hearing, I also supervise our small Congressional oversight team, which works closely with our Office of Legislative Affairs and components to assist and advise them on responding to Congressional oversight requests from the 92 Committees and Subcommittees with jurisdiction over the Department.

As Assistant Secretary for Legislative Affairs Tia Johnson said during her testimony in January, Secretary Johnson has pledged transparency and candor with Congress, and has committed to respond to Congressional inquiries in a timely fashion. Under his leadership, the Department's responsiveness to oversight requests has improved by over 60%. We have cut our average response time from 42 business days to less than 17. It was therefore gratifying to hear Chairman Chaffetz's recognition of these efforts, when he thanked the Secretary and the Department for our efforts in this area, and recognized the progress that he has made.

We accomplished this in spite of a significant increase in correspondence. During calendar year 2015, DHS received approximately 700 oversight letters and countless more oversight requests. Of those, 70 letters came from Members of this Committee. At the current rate, those numbers will be significantly higher this year, and we expect to make available far more documents than last year. Similarly, the hearing schedule has accelerated. DHS is on pace to provide 50% more hearing witnesses to this Committee this year than last. We recognize Congress's legitimate oversight responsibility and we are making greater efforts to accommodate the Committee's increased demands.

In inviting DHS to testify today, the Committee referenced the Department's responses to oversight requests and demands regarding the Transportation Security Administration (TSA), the U.S. Secret Service, and two immigration-related matters.

In the past six months, TSA has received eight letters with over 30 requests for information. In response, TSA has made available about 15,000 pages of documents, TSA staff conducted a briefing, and five TSA personnel have participated in transcribed interviews. In addition, another briefing is scheduled for later this month.

Since this Committee began its oversight investigation of the Secret Service, it has issued 13 letters, one subpoena, and countless informal requests. In response, the Secret Service has provided 15 briefings, hearing testimony from two witnesses, and transcribed interviews by eight employees who have voluntarily left their duties for the day to accommodate the Committee's request. At the Chairman's request, the Secret Service also facilitated a visit to its headquarters for Members of this Committee. In total, the Secret Service has made available over 13,000 pages of documents in response to the Committee's requests in this area, and thousands of pages of classified documents, in the appropriate setting – all at a time when, as the Chairman and Ranking Member have noted, the Secret Service faces historic challenges on the resource front.

These efforts have supplemented the Secret Service's hard work to respond to inquiries about the operations of the Secret Service from the independent Protective Mission Panel, a number of investigations by the Office of the Inspector General, and the oversight inquiries of ten other Congressional committees and subcommittees.

With regard to the immigration-related matters, the Department has produced over 2,000 pages of documents, provided a classified and unclassified briefing, and a day-long transcribed interview of ICE's Special Agent in Charge of ICE's El Paso office, who flew in from Texas to accommodate the Committee. We are continuing to respond to your requests for documents and additional transcribed interviews.

Mr. Chairman, Secretary Johnson has made responsiveness to Congress a priority. The Department is determined to continue improving on its past record of oversight response.

I will be happy to answer any questions you or the Members of the Committee may have.



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Jonathan E. Meyer is Deputy General Counsel at the Department of Homeland Security. He has been at DHS since 2011, and was appointed Deputy General Counsel in 2013.

In his current position, Jon supervises the work of hundreds of attorneys, including attorneys at the U.S. Secret Service, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the U.S Coast Guard. In addition, Jon oversees several groups of attorneys at DHS headquarters, including the Regulations Law Division, the Legal Counsel Division (which includes litigation, legislation, civil rights and civil liberties, and privacy), and the Intelligence Law Group.

Previously, Jon served as Deputy Assistant Attorney General in the Office of Legal Policy at the U.S. Department of Justice, as Special Deputy General Counsel at Amtrak, and as Counsel to Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr., on the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Earlier, Jon worked at the Justice Department's Office of Policy Development, as a litigator at Wilmer, Cutler & Pickering in Washington, and as a litigator and corporate lawyer at Davis Polk & Wardwell in New York. He began his career as an aide to Congressman Bill Gradison of Ohio.

Originally from Cincinnati, Jon also spent much of his childhood in Jerusalem, Israel and speaks fluent Hebrew and French. He holds a B.A. from Harvard College, a J.D. from Columbia University and a Masters in Public Affairs from Princeton University. He lives in Chevy Chase, Maryland with his wife, Dr. Lauren Strauss, and their three children, Jordana, Ezra, and Naomi.