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HOMELAND SECURITY IN THE AGE OF ISIL

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LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

CLARK ERVIN

Executive Director, Aspen Institute's Homeland
Security program, Executive Director, Aspen Security
Forum

RYAN LIZZA

Washington Correspondent, *The New Yorker*

JEH JOHNSON

Secretary of Homeland Security

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HOMELAND SECURITY IN THE AGE OF ISIL

MR. ERVIN: All right, everyone, if you could -- those of you who are not yet in the room, if you could make your way into the room, so we can begin the session. All right. Well, good morning, everyone. I think all of you here today were here last night as well, but in case there are some newcomers among you, I'm Clark Ervin, the Executive Director of the Aspen Institute's Homeland Security program, and the Executive Director, also, of the Aspen Security Forum.

Welcome to the Forum. We're delighted that you're here with us today and this week. I want to begin with thanks to our corporate sponsors for the Forum, IBM, Intel Security, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Target, and to our media partner, CNN.

Just a couple of quick administrative announcements, and then we'll start today's program. One, there is a bookstore, which some of you probably have already discovered, right behind the reception desk. A number of our speakers and moderators have written terrific books about homeland security, terrorism, counterterrorism, so thanks to the Aspen Bookstore, those are available to you. So I'll hope you'll take time to look at that during the course of the breaks.

Secondly, you all are welcome to breakfast here at Aspen Meadows. We ask that you arrive no earlier here than 8:30, so as to give the staff time to set up. If you'd like an earlier one, it's available in the Aspen Meadows. With that, we'll begin today's program. We're delighted to have the Secretary of Homeland Security with us here today. And the title of this session, as you know, is *Homeland Security in the Age of ISIL*.

To moderate this morning's session with the Secretary, we're very pleased to welcome back to the Aspen Security Forum an old friend of ours, Ryan Lizza. Ryan is the Washington correspondent for *The New Yorker*. He covers the White House, Congress, and national politics, generally, and he joined *The New Yorker* in 2007. He's also written for the *New York Times*, for the *New Republic*,

for *GQ*, for *New York Magazine*, and *The Atlantic*. Ryan is also, as we all know, a political commentator for CNN, and also I didn't know, but an adjunct professor at Georgetown University. With that, Ryan Lizza.

(Applause)

MR. LIZZA: Thanks very much. Thanks, Clark. Thanks to the Aspen Institute for having me back. Very lucky today to have the Secretary, Homeland Security, Jeh Johnson. Not going to go through his biography. You all have it in your pamphlet. I think as I was preparing for this, the two things that struck me as the most interesting -- the first thing is, it's difficult to know where to start in an interview with the Secretary. He, as legal counsel at the Pentagon, was involved in the thorniest, most fraught issues that the Obama administration inherited from the George W. Bush administration. As many of you know, he was responsible for helping rescind Don't Ask, Don't Tell. He was the last legal word on every drone strike that was outside of the main theaters of war when he was at the Pentagon. He was in charge of the fraught issue of figuring out how to shut down the prison at Guantanamo. The list goes on and on. And so with that --

MR. JOHNSON: I wanted an easier job.

MR. LIZZA: Yeah. With that background --

(Laughter)

MR. LIZZA: -- it does make you realize why you were the guy for DHS, which -- another institution with a lot of problems when you inherited it. But I want to ask you, given that background, you basically went from the Pentagon, where you were on offense in the war on terror, to Homeland Security, where you're almost purely playing defense. So one, I want you to start out by telling us what are the lessons you learned dealing with all of those issues at the Pentagon, and what are the differences in those two positions that you had, going from the Pentagon to this sprawling DHS, with hundreds of thousands of employees, pieces of the federal government that really

don't belong together, but yet that have been smooshed together. Just tell us a little bit about that transition.

MR. JOHNSON: Big question. First of all, lessons, impressions. Eighteen, nineteen months into the job, I work with terrific people. First of all, I want to also mention that it's great to be back at Aspen. This is my third year in a row. Appreciate all the great work that goes into preparing this. Clark and Walt put on a terrific program, along with the others. Many good friends here. A lot of people in this room who I consider my personal heroes. And I hope everybody here has had a chance to meet our terrific DHS team, Dr. Hube Anguardia (phonetic), who is on the panels, Undersecretary Frank Taylor, our new undersecretary for management, Russ Deyo, our TSA Administrator, Pete Neffenger, who was confirmed just a couple of weeks ago, and has been on the job. Hope everybody here has had a chance to meet these extraordinary people, along with our other DHS people here.

So you're correct. Part of what I did as the senior legal counsel at the Department of Defense was to sign off on a lot of our counterterrorism operations legally, and I took that very seriously. I looked at each one of them very carefully, and that was on offense. We've taken the fight to the enemy overseas. Homeland Security, by its nature, is defending our borders, defending our aviation, defending maritime ports, defending cybersecurity. It would seem as if we're on defense, and there are, in fact, ways in which we can be on offense. And so I am pushing our people very aggressively on a lot of different things.

For example, pre-clearance capability, aviation security, I want to see us build more aviation security on the front end of a flight coming from overseas into the United States. I want to see us build a Customs' capability on the front end of a last-point-of-departure airport, so that we have more information, and we screen people, and we know what we know about them before they get on the flights bound for the U.S. And there are a lot of airports out overseas that have indicated an interest

in working with us on that. I want to build more of that. Cybersecurity, which I suspect we'll get into, we are on an accelerated timetable that I have set down to build our additional capabilities to block more intrusions in the federal, civilian dot gov world, and to enhance our continuous diagnostics and mitigation practices.

I want to see us get to 100 percent of the federal civilian dot gov world by the end of the year. And we're on an aggressive mission to make our department function most efficiently. That's something that Russ, our undersecretary for management, and I are doing. He is a retired business executive from Johnson and Johnson. And so we've got a lot of initiatives out there. And I, in many respects, believe that part of my job is, frankly, being on offense to stay one step ahead of a lot of the threats that we know we face.

MR. LIZZA: You have talked about what you call the new normal, right? Tell us what the new normal is and what is the new normal in the context of the threat from ISIS?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, over the last 14 years, since 911, we've seen core Al Qaeda, as everybody knows, AQAP, the Al Qaeda-affiliated elements of Al Shabab, which, while I was at DoD, we were focused on in our counterterrorism efforts. We have done a lot to degrade core Al Qaeda, through our good efforts. We have done a lot to degrade AQAP and Al Shabab through our good efforts. The global terrorist threat now, as everybody knows, and as Jim talked about last night, has evolved, and it has evolved in a very significant way from those groups to more groups, ISIL being the most prominent example, obviously, and it has evolved from terrorist-directed terrorist attacks to terrorist-inspired attacks.

I disagree a little bit with Jim last night, in that I think that the distinction between terrorist-directed and terrorist-inspired is a significant one that the American people need to understand --

MR. LIZZA: What's that?

MR. JOHNSON: -- to understand why we are where we are in our efforts. And so if you catalog the terrorist attacks and attempted attacks in this country and in Europe, for example, they almost fit neatly into one of two boxes, the terrorist-directed attacks, with an operative who has been recruited, trained, directed overseas and exported to someplace else to commit a terrorist attack, to terrorist-inspired attacks, which very often, most often involve a homegrown or even home-born threat, and the individual has never even come face to face with a member of ISIL or AQ, but is inspired, through the very effective use of social media, to commit an attack or attempt to commit a small-scale attack.

And I think the American people need to understand how we have evolved to this new phase, because it does involve a whole of government approach, it does involve a lot of domestic-based efforts, in addition to the good work of the FBI and in addition to taking the fight to the enemy overseas. And so we're doing a lot of things in DHS. We have enhanced our federal protective service presence in a lot of federal buildings around the country. There's a presence right outside here that I don't think was here last year. That's in addition to the three wild bears that were at my door last night.

(Laughter)

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: We have enhanced our aviation security overseas at last-point-of-departure airports. We are, with Frank Taylor's leadership, enhancing the information sharing with state and local law enforcement, which I think is crucial. Garland City is a perfect example of the importance of sharing what we see and what we know with state and local law enforcement, so that they have the big picture. We have enhanced our CVE engagements domestically, Countering Violent Extremism, which I know we're going to talk about a little bit more. That is a personal priority of mine. I have personally met with large numbers of Muslim leaders in this country and communities --

MR. LIZZA: Wait. Can I --

MR. JOHNSON: -- around the country, and I think that's critical to our efforts.

MR. LIZZA: Before we get into CVE, first of all, I want to appreciate your security detail, because I'm in the suite next to yours, so when the bears come I'm glad they're there.

(Laughter)

MR. LIZZA: Just to -- I want to talk about the difference between the threat from Al Qaeda and the threat from ISIS. I mean in a sense, directed versus self-motivated, isn't the lone wolf or the random-inspired gunman a better problem to have than the capabilities that Al Qaeda had with the self-directed threats that plotted spectacular attacks? Or do you see ISIS moving in the same direction, and then eventually that's what they'll want to do?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, let me answer it this way. We are facing the prospect of smaller-scale attacks, given how this whole thing is evolving, but we face the prospect of that day to day in a lot of places in this country. As I think Jim pointed out, um, Abdul Aziz was not on our radar, and I would not have considered Chattanooga, Tennessee to be a high-risk area. And so we are facing smaller-scale attacks that are harder to detect day to day to day. The alarming longer-term phenomenon we have to be concerned about with ISIL is any time a terrorist organization with that level of resources in excess of 30,000 fighters, with foreign fighters pouring into Syria, and that level of depravity establishing territory, an attempt to establish a caliphate in Iraq and Syria, so that this very large, dangerous terrorist organization has a place to base, train, send operatives, that is a huge homeland security concern to a number of nations. And so that is the longer-term phenomenon that we see, and we're very concerned about, which is why we're taking the fight to them in addition to the basic homeland security concerns that we see day to day.

MR. LIZZA: All right. Now let's talk about CVE, Countering Violent Extremism. I think the first question I have about that, which you hear from many, many Republicans, and is a criticism of the term itself, why do you and the Obama Administration describe this as violent extremism and refuse to use the phrase "Islamic Extremism"? What is the distinction that you're trying to get at there?

MR. JOHNSON: I believe strongly, and I hear this over and over again from Muslim leaders in this country, that to refer to ISIL as Islamic Extremism concedes too much. It dignifies them as occupying some part of the Islamic faith, which is about peace. And so when I go into the CVE engagements --

MR. LIZZA: Well, tell everyone what you're talking about with the CVE engagement.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah. It's countering violent extremism here domestically.

MR. LIZZA: So you're going around, you're meeting with Islamic communities in the United States.

MR. JOHNSON: Yes. And I did not invent this. This is something that our department, the FBI, and other parts of the federal government have been doing for some time, but I've taken it on as a personal mission. We go to these roundtables, these discussions with groups, anywhere from 50 to 100 people. I've been to Boston, Brooklyn, New York, Northern Virginia, Maryland, Chicago, Columbus, Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Houston, and I want to get to every single metropolitan area in this, major metropolitan area in this country that has a significant Muslim population to talk to Muslim community leaders about helping us if they see somebody going in the wrong direction.

As Jim said last night, it's almost always the case that there is someone else who knows. And we have seen success stories, where somebody in the community has intervened, and we need to see more of that. And so we go out, we do these things, and it's a two-way conversation

where people in the community have lots of issues they want to talk to me about. I am responsible for the enforcement of our immigration laws, for example, and things that happen at airports. So they want talk to me about things, and I want to talk to them about helping us help them in our public safety homeland security efforts. And the message is it's your homeland, too. And I think people hear that message, and I think we've made a lot of progress in building trust, building relationships, and almost always have the local sheriff, the local police chief with me, and local SAC of the FBI Office, and we're building trust. We're getting some pushback.

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: There is actually a CCVE effort out there, countering our Countering Violent Extremism initiative. And as Mike Leider (phonetic) pointed out to me yesterday, that's how you know you're having an impact. And so we are making progress. I'd like to see us take our efforts to the next level. We talk a lot about the counter message. The counter message actually does exist, but it needs a larger microphone. Counter messaging is not something domestically for the government, but it does exist. There's some imams that have done some good work. It needs a larger platform. It needs a larger microphone. And so one of the things I want to do in this next phase is engage, frankly, foundations, philanthropies to support this kind of effort here in the United States.

We want to engage the high-tech sector in helping us with the messaging, but I think CVE is fundamental to our efforts. Now at these engagements, whether it's Somalia-Americans in Minneapolis, or Syrian-Americans, or Pakistani-Americans, the one thing I hear consistently, irrespective of the socio-economics of these groups, and they're not a monolith, is ISIL is trying to hijack my religion. We can't let them do that. And so if you call it Islamic anything, we are dignifying this terrorist organization with occupying a part of the Islamic faith, which Muslims in this country I know push back very strongly on. So if I went into these communities calling it Islamic Extremism, I'd get nowhere.

MR. LIZZA: But aren't we, as a -- isn't the government denying the fundamental religious component of this kind of extremism by not using the word "Islamic"?

MR. JOHNSON: ISIL --

MR. LIZZA: Your analysts, I assume, in the government are trained to understand the religious dimensions of this kind of violence. To some people it sounds like political correctness, and that we're missing an important component of what's going on if we don't describe this -- if we don't understand the religious component.

MR. JOHNSON: I could not disagree more. ISIL would like us --

MR. LIZZA: It is called the Islamic State.

MR. JOHNSON: And many people believe that they do not deserve to be called Islamic or a state.

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: ISIL, I think, would like to be referred to as Islamic Extremism, because it, therefore, concedes that what they are saying and what they are doing occupies legitimately some form of Islam, which is about peace. And so here domestically I think it's critical that in order to build our relationship and build our level of cooperation with the Islamic community here we have to say to them, look, we understand that what this depraved terrorist organization is doing is no part of your religion.

MR. LIZZA: Some people believe that what we're witnessing in the Middle East, though, is a civil war within Islam. That sounds like it's not your view at all.

MR. JOHNSON: Look, I think ISIL believes that what it is doing is driven by their religion. The Muslims that I know and that I have spent a lot of time with in this country believe just the opposite, and so it's important to remember that Islam is one of the most -- one

of the largest religions in the world, and this band of terrorists and criminals does not represent what the overwhelming majority of Muslims in this country believe Islam is all about.

MR. LIZZA: Let me ask you about violent extremism in general, and whether we overstate the threat from Jihadism in the United States. We had two very, very tragic events recently, one in Chattanooga and one in Charleston, of course. The *New York Times* recently reported on some very interesting findings from the New America Foundation that show that since 911 there have been more attacks by violent extremists who were white supremacists than people who were Islamic Extremists, which I think challenges a lot of the assumptions, especially at a conference like this. How does DHS grapple with homegrown extremism that, according to the *Times* and according to some of this reporting recently, local law enforcement is actually more concerned about than anything coming from the Middle East?

MR. JOHNSON: Local law enforcement should be concerned about mass shootings, rampages, multi-victim acts of violence. A lot of our grant making in DHS, we put out over \$2 billion in grants to state and local law enforcement, goes to readiness, first responder equipment, active shooter training that can be useful in a variety of different mass casualty situations. A lot of the first responder equipment that was used at the Boston Marathon, for example, was funded by our department, but a lot of that same equipment could be just as effective, and is just as useful in any mass shooting event irrespective of the motive.

You know, my mission, our mission at DHS is largely protecting our borders, land, sea, and air. Chief Fisher is here. He's our chief of the U.S. Border Patrol, but given how the threat has evolved, we also have to pay attention to the effectiveness of terrorist groups' ability not just to send an operative physically into this country, but to send a message into this country through social media, through the internet, and that is a mission that both DHS and law enforcement must undertake and must be mindful of.

MR. LIZZA: But should the -- should the U.S. Government be spending more resources on tracking, identifying white supremacist groups that, or as much -- should we be spending more resources on that than we are right now if --

MR. JOHNSON: I believe that --

MR. LIZZA: If the numbers show that actually more Americans have been killed since 911 from that sort of threat, rather than Jihadism.

MR. JOHNSON: Look, I believe that we do spend and we do invest considerable resources in tracking violent white supremacist groups, violent domestic-based groups that have an extremist purpose, and we do so very effectively. And we have to. We have to be mindful of that. The cornerstone of our department's mission is counterterrorism, you know, and it has evolved to a place where we have to be mindful of the overseas terrorist organization-inspired attack here by a homegrown terrorist here. That's part of our mission. It is, and this goes to the point of your question. Given how it's evolving, it is moving more closely to the purely domestic-based act of terrorism.

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: So there's a mission there for both DHS and law enforcement, obviously.

MR. LIZZA: You were talking about ISIS and controlling territory in the Middle East. The 911 Report, one of its core recommendations was never, ever should the United States let a group like Al Qaeda, or one of its affiliates, or group like ISIS, which obviously didn't know about at the time, gain territory. Never let it build a state. That's when it has the resources and capabilities to launch a more spectacular attack against us.

You were at the Pentagon when we drew down the troops in Iraq. Ray Odierno said this week that we could

have "prevented the rise of ISIS if we had left more troops in Iraq." Do you believe that the Obama Administration could have prevented the rise of ISIS?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I don't -- I don't really have -- I don't like to engage in second guessing. I fully support the direction that we have taken in our efforts overseas. I do believe that any time a terrorist organization sets up a caliphate or establishes territory --

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: -- that needs to be a huge national security, homeland security concern, because it provides the basis for doing a lot of bad things, and it's difficult to root out once they have that kind of foothold.

MR. LIZZA: Do you believe --

MR. JOHNSON: The best -- the best approach is to keep these guys on the run, and hit them where they live, and hit them where they train, and we've done a lot of that in the last number of years, and we need to continue to do that.

MR. LIZZA: Is there a -- is there a military component to defeating ISIS that we have not pursued that if you -- that you would -- that you would pursue?

MR. JOHNSON: We continue to, through John Allen's good efforts, build and support an international coalition to take on ISIL. We continue through DOD's good efforts to work with the Iraqi security forces, to train them. So in that respect that is the national security military piece of that that is necessary to degrade and defeat ISIL.

MR. LIZZA: I want to ask you a version of the question that Wolf asked Director Comey last night about Iran. Under the current agreement, Iran is about to receive over the next year or two a huge influx of cash from its frozen accounts, and end of sanctions. This is

the number one state-sponsor of terrorism in the world. How, if at all, is DHS preparing for the changes that are about to take place in Iran? A lot of people predict that Iranian hardliners, who are not happy with this deal, will sort of make a show of aggression. How is DHS preparing for that, if at all?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I'll give you a version of Jim Comey's answer --

MR. LIZZA: (Laughs)

MR. JOHNSON: -- which is it is a concern.

MR. LIZZA: I shouldn't have referenced that.

MR. JOHNSON: And through our --

MR. LIZZA: It is a concern.

MR. JOHNSON: Through our intelligence components in the intelligence community, we keep a close eye on overseas threats that we see are emerging from a number of nations. One thing that strikes me, I've been at this now for six-and-a-half years, we have, since 911, I believe, come a long way in the level of sophistication of our intelligence community, and their ability to attract and detect potential threats to our homeland from overseas, to the point where it's very often an exercise between sorting out what's real versus the noise.

MR. LIZZA: Yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: And so we have developed good capabilities to detect plotting, to detect efforts to do something bad in our homeland. We do have the problem of going dark that Jim talked about last night, very definitely, and we have to find a balanced solution to that problem, but I think the good news here is that our intelligence capability since 911, our ability to connect dots is pretty sophisticated.

MR. LIZZA: All right. Since you're responsible for --

MR. JOHNSON: Which is why, you know -- which is why I think a number of us are so concerned about how this whole thing is evolving, because we've got to be now concerned about the homegrown threat, which is harder to detect in many respects.

MR. LIZZA: Let's switch to a topic where the temperature is a little lower and it's a little easier to talk about. Immigration.

(Laughter)

MR. LIZZA: There has been a lot of discussion in public recently, as you may have seen, if you've turned on CNN, about illegal immigrants coming into this country and committing crimes. What are the facts about that? What are the numbers? What are the trend lines about undocumented immigrants and crime in America right now?

MR. JOHNSON: Interesting fact is that a few years ago Pew took a poll of the American public and asked, "Do you believe that more or less people are coming into our country illegally than ten years ago?" Fifty-five percent two years ago said more, when, in fact, it's far less. Because we have invested so much as a nation, as a government in border security over the last 15 years, we've got more fence, we've got more technology. Chief Fisher has way more people. The border patrol is now the most funded it has ever been in our nation's history. Apprehensions on the southern border, which are an indicator of total attempts to cross the border, have gone down dramatically. The high was --

MR. LIZZA: Apprehensions have gone down. So is that the best indicator of --

MR. JOHNSON: That is the best indicator we have of total attempts to cross the border. The high was FY-2000. It was 1.6 million. And I'm on a mission to put these facts out there. Over the last several years it's been down around 400, 450,000. This year it is considerably less than it was last year, and if the current pace continues this year it will be the lowest

number since the early 1970s of total apprehensions on the southern border. That is a good thing.

MR. LIZZA: That's strange, also, because the economy is improving, so you would expect that illegal immigration would be increasing. No?

MR. JOHNSON: That is correct, because normally apprehensions correlate to how our economy is doing. Our economy gets better, more people want to come here. That's the pull factor. Our economy is getting better, but apprehensions are going down. At the same time we are, and there's a report that was released today by the Migration Policy Institute, which is a non-partisan entity, that indicates that through our realignment of our priorities, we are focused more on the criminals. We are focused more on the threats to public safety. That is the direction the president and I want to take our enforcement resources. So we want to get at the criminals who are undocumented and remove them as opposed to somebody who's been here for years and has committed no serious crimes. And part of that effort is this new priority enforcement program, which we have created, which replaces the old secure communities program, which had become hugely controversial, such that a lot of communities didn't want to work with us anymore.

San Francisco, the killing of Kate Steinle is a tragedy, but it is also, in my judgment, exhibit A for why we need the new priority enforcement program, so that we can work effectively with state and local law enforcement, for them to transfer to us convicted criminals who are undocumented.

MR. LIZZA: Whose fault is it that her killer was released?

MR. JOHNSON: Look, there's a very elaborate timeline to what happened here. The fact is he was deported five times, he was prosecuted for unlawful reentry three times. He was serving his sentence in the Federal Bureau of Prisons for his last unlawful reentry. Our immigration enforcement personnel put a detainer on him when he was there. He was then transferred by BOP to

the San Francisco sheriff. We put a detainer on him there, which was not honored, and he was released. Our new program, if it works effectively, and I believe it will, would have brought about a different result, where the sheriff would have given us notice that they are about to release somebody who's undocumented, who is one of our priorities for removal, and he would have gone straight to us, and he never would have hit the streets.

That's what the new program is intended to do, to replace the old controversial program. It's an effort to promote public safety. We've had it out there now, and we're working with jurisdictions. We're getting good reception. And this is before San Francisco. We're getting good reception from a lot of mayors, and sheriffs, and governors to the new program, and I believe we're going to be in a better place.

MR. LIZZA: All right. One mischievous question before we go to the audience. Donald Trump is going down to the border today.

(Laughter)

MR. LIZZA: He has asked to meet with ICE officials there. One, would you tell your employees, your ICE officials down there, to meet with him, and, in general, what would your message be to him about what he does or doesn't understand about the immigration problem in this country?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I'm not in the business of giving advice to candidates for president.

MR. LIZZA: But you're in the business of correcting misperceptions if they're out there.

MR. JOHNSON: A lot of people -- a lot of people go to the southern border. A lot of members of Congress go to the southern border, and I want them to see the good work of our immigration enforcement personnel and our border patrol. And the facts are that apprehensions have gone way down. We've invested a lot in border security. We are much better at border security than we used to be.

And the undocumented population in this country has stopped growing. It used to be up over 12 million. The best estimate is it's now about 11.3 million. It has stopped growing, and it is getting older.

More than half of that population has been here over ten years. And we have to reckon with that population. They're not going away. No administration is going to deport them, because we don't have the resources to do that. They are becoming integrated members of our society, as long as they don't commit any serious crimes. We have to reckon with them one way or another. In a lot of states undocumented have driver's licenses. The California Supreme Court says an undocumented immigrant has the right to practice law. So we have to reckon with this population. And I want to see us, and we are focusing our enforcement resources on threats to public safety. That's what we need to do.

MR. LIZZA: All right. Let's take some questions from the audience (inaudible).

MR. JOHNSON: Which, by the way, I have a harder time doing if Congress does not repeal sequestration.

MR. LIZZA: We're going to get to this, yeah.

MR. JOHNSON: So when my friends in Congress are here later this week, I hope someone will ask them how do you expect Homeland Security to do all the things that you want them to do if you are decapitating their budget, so anyway --

MR. LIZZA: All right. Josh?

MR. JOHNSON: Questions?

MR. LIZZA: Josh probably has a follow-up on Donald Trump.

(Laughter)

MR. ROGIN: Thank you. Josh Rogin, *Bloomberg View*. Thanks for taking the time today, and thank you for

your service. I wanted to ask you about the drive to close Guantanamo. We all read the articles, and the White House has talked about it yesterday, there's going to be a new plan, a new initiative. It's going to be written down. It's going to be given to John McCain. We're going to try to close Guantanamo in the last 18 months.

There's always been two big obstacles. One is can we safely release, or repatriate, or resettle the detainees who we're going to let go. That's something that you dealt with very closely at the OD. The other one is can we safely house, prosecute, and keep the ones we can't let go? And that's something you're dealing with now as Homeland Security Chief. What is your response to those two obstacles? What's changed? What's different now? Why can we now do these things? As we read, the Defense Department has been very, very weary of signing off on any of these releases, and you've been sympathetic to that position. What is the likelihood this is actually going to get done? Thanks.

MR. JOHNSON: The population at Guantanamo, when this Administration came into office, was 242. It's now down to less than half of that. With the appropriate security assurances we have moved a lot of detainees to a lot of different countries. We've got around 110, 115, or so, left at this point. These are probably the toughest cases. And in my view, and in the view of a lot of other people, there's going to come a point soon where it really makes no sense from a fiscal standpoint to keep this very -- put aside the fact that its recruitment tool, what it represents to the U.S.'s prestige --

MR. LIZZA: Is it still a recruitment tool, or is it still used against us?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, it has been, and it, in my view, continues to be a black mark on what this country should be about, and we want to close it. But in addition to that, the numbers are getting so low that it really doesn't make any fiscal sense to keep this hugely expensive facility open in Cuba. And we ought to have a plan for transferring the remaining detainees to the United States with the appropriate protections consistent

with law, and those that can be prosecuted, and are being prosecuted, and we should continue with that. And eventually those that can be transferred should be transferred with the appropriate assurances. But it's an issue we have to grapple with, and it's costing us millions and millions of dollars to house these people in Cuba, and there are better, more efficient, effective ways to do that in the United States.

MR. LIZZA: Do you think that President Obama will be able to make good on his promise --

MR. JOHNSON: I know, I know --

MR. LIZZA: -- to close it by the end of his term?

MR. JOHNSON: I know, I know from numerous conversations that this president is very committed to closing Guantanamo Bay, and does not want to leave this to his successor, whoever that may be.

MR. LIZZA: Okay. Go ahead.

MR. SHAPIRO: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. Steve Shapiro. Many of the attendees here and you know that I work with an organization called BENS, Business Executives for National Security, and we've recently finished a multi-year study with respect to domestic security processes, and procedures, and structures, sort of the boring org chart aspects of the domestic security world that you live in.

One of our major findings is that, as you know, there are dozens of domestic entities that participate in domestic security and intelligence, and they're across the board. Many of them are in your agency, and many of them are not. And that there is no real central enterprise-wide leadership or coordination of all of these well-meaning and hardworking entities and agencies. And in that regard, as you know, and maybe the audience knows, there's something called the intelligence community, which is a defined legal term that includes approximately 17 of these entities, many of which are, in fact, or some of

which are, in fact, are on the domestic side, including the FBI, DEA, Coast Guard, for example, but there are a number of entities performing domestic security and intelligence that are not included in this defined intelligence community, meaning that the director of national intelligence doesn't have the ability to help coordinate and shape a unified mission plan.

Those include, in your agency alone, Customs and Border Protection Office of Intelligence, Immigration and Customs Enforcement Office of Intelligence.

MR. LIZZA: Sir, we're running a little low on time.

MR. SHAPIRO: Thank you very much.

MR. LIZZA: Let's get to the question.

MR. SHAPIRO: The punchline is.

MR. JOHNNSON: I get his point.

MR. SHAPIRO: You know where I'm headed. Would you --

MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

MR. SHAPIRO: Would you -- could you consider the inclusion of those five or six DHS entities that are now outside of the IC to be included inside the IC?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, let me say two things. I think that there is an intelligence capability of border security, for example, that is unique to border security, such that it doesn't necessarily need to become part of the larger IC. There are components within my department that have intelligence capabilities unique to our own set of missions. Having said that, we are, in my department, moving away from the stovepipes. We have a unity of effort initiative that I announced a year ago to bring more centralized decision making. When it comes to budget acquisition we've created something called a Joint Requirements Council and an acquisition form initiative --

reform initiative, as part of our overall unity off effort initiative. So one of the other things we've done, which I think goes to your question, is a southern border campaign strategy, which is modeled on the combat and command approach, where we bring to bear all of the assets of DHS in some part of the country to border security. So as a result we now have a joint taskforce east that is concerned about the maritime approaches in the Southeast. We have a joint task force west, headed by Commander Robert Harris, that coordinates all of the assets of DHS in the Southwest on border security. And that's the direction that I've charged our leaders to go in, more centralized strategic focus on how we do our job.

The Department is a huge department, with 22 components, but it's been around just 12 years. And so I want to see us bring together in a more strategic way our border security efforts, our intelligence collection efforts, our budget making, our acquisition decisions. That's the overall direction we're moving in, and we've made a lot of progress over the last year.

My probably top priority, in addition to our substantive missions, is management reform of our department, so that it runs and it works more effectively and efficiently for the American people. And this is one of the things that we're doing to bring that about.

MR. LIZZA: We have time for one more. Is that Catherine back there? Yeah, Catherine? This will be the last one.

MS. HERRIDGE: Thank you. Thank you very much. Catherine Herridge, Fox News. How many Americans have either tried or successfully reached Syria? I understood it's upwards of about 250 now. And ISIS has a compelling message. What is the U.S. Government's message, and why isn't it more effective?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, Catherine, the last number that I saw of those who have left or attempted to leave is 180, but I believe the number, the publicly disclosed number is higher now. It's probably around 200. I'm not sure of the exact number. The message that ISIL puts out

combines violence, it combines -- it has a very Western slick appeal to it. It says join us. It brands itself as a form of Islam that I believe is illegitimate. And it has a lot of appeal to a young person who may be prone to violence, who is looking for a cause. And so there is a counter message that is being developed. I think that part of that counter message has to be more than just don't do this, this is bad. There has to be a positive aspect to that counter message to show people a different way in which they can channel their energy.

And so I believe that that message is being developed, but it needs a broader platform. And I think that's fundamental to our overall homeland security efforts.

MR. LIZZA: Thanks. Go -- you have few more seconds if there's something you want to say.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you very much. So the last thing I want to say to this very distinguished group is my overall assessment of where we are in our efforts, and in the threat we face, is this. This is what I say continuously to audiences. We have to find the right balance to strike between basic physical security, whether it's aviation security, border security, even in the world of cybersecurity, where absolute cybersecurity means you go on your system, and there's no access to the outside world, and you're going to live in a prison. Nobody wants that.

So in a free society we've got to find, and we've got to strike the right balance. The most important part of our homeland security is preserving the things that are great in this country, and so in every message to the public that I deliver about where we are, I say but the public should continue to go to events, to celebrate this great country, whether it's July 4th, or otherwise, because the nature of terrorism is that it gets nowhere if the people refuse to be terrorized. And so in things like the Boston Marathon, it's no accident that in this country we come back twice as strong, with even more runners the following year. And there are examples like that all over, in the U.S. Military, in Oklahoma City. And that's

truly the greatness of this country. And so all of us, I hope, who are in many respects leaders, I hope you will encourage the public to freely associate, freely travel, and celebrate this great country. Thanks a lot.

MR. LIZZA: It's a good note to end on. Thank you, Mr. Secretary.

(Applause)

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