

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Chuck Grassley (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Mr. Bartlett, in your testimony you state that two million Syrian refugees are currently in Turkey, over one million are in Lebanon, over 600,000 are in Jordan. Also, you say Egypt and Iraq have opened their borders to almost 400,000 Syrians and are providing assistance and protection.

And yet, according to Amnesty International, the Gulf states (Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain), as well as affluent Asian economies like Japan and South Korea, have accepted no Syrian refugees at all. Russia, which has now commenced military operations in Syria, has also offered zero resettlement spots to Syrian refugees.

1. What is the Department of State doing to convince other countries in the Middle East, especially affluent countries like Saudi Arabia and other Gulf states, to accept Syrian refugees?

Answer:

The United States continues to actively encourage countries in the Middle East and around the world to support refugees. Countries such as Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey have taken in millions of Syrian refugees. Gulf countries have made significant monetary contributions in humanitarian aid.

None of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states are party to the 1951 Refugee Convention or 1967 Protocol and they have been cautious in

accepting Syrians in refugee status. GCC states have instead allowed some Syrians to enter and remain in their countries through granting work permits and extending residency permits. We continue to encourage them to find ways for additional Syrians to enter, particularly vulnerable Syrians, by increasing the number of residency and work permits available and increasing cooperation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

We encourage all countries, including those in the Gulf, to fulfill all outstanding pledges, and encourage new financial contributions on a recurring annual basis through the UN system to avoid duplication. We were recently pleased to hear of the establishment of the King Salman Humanitarian Center and we look forward to coordinating humanitarian efforts with Saudi Arabia and other partners in the humanitarian response.

We also continue to encourage GCC states to follow up on the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) September 13 Emergency Meeting in Jeddah, which focused on the Syrian refugee crisis. Specifically, we urge all OIC members to join the Refugee Convention as called for by OIC Secretary General Madani (over half of all OIC members, including all the Gulf countries, are not parties to that Convention), take in more refugees,

and adopt an OIC framework on refugees to promote cooperation between OIC members to help alleviate the refugee crisis in the Muslim world.

We also urge these countries to follow up on plans for an OIC ministerial to discuss and adopt a plan of action on refugee issues in OIC states.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Chuck Grassley (#2)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Mr. Bartlett, in your testimony you state that two million Syrian refugees are currently in Turkey, over one million are in Lebanon, over 600,000 are in Jordan. Also, you say Egypt and Iraq have opened their borders to almost 400,000 Syrians and are providing assistance and protection.

And yet, according to Amnesty International, the Gulf states (Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain), as well as affluent Asian economies like Japan and South Korea, have accepted no Syrian refugees at all. Russia, which has now commenced military operations in Syria, has also offered zero resettlement spots to Syrian refugees.

2. Has the Department raised the issue of refugee resettlement with affluent Asian countries like Japan and South Korea?

Answer:

The Department has discussed and will continue to discuss refugee resettlement with countries around the world, including Japan and South Korea. Both countries participate in the Annual Tripartite Consultations on Resettlement hosted by UNHCR in Geneva. In addition, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration has provided technical expertise to both countries as they increase their resettlement programs.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

1. The draft report submitted to the Senate and House Judiciary Committees indicated that the Department of State would need approximately \$503.7 million to process and resettle 75,000 refugees. The final report indicated that the Department of State would need the same amount of money to process and resettle 85,000 refugees.

- a. How much will this increase cost?
- b. How much will it cost to admit the 100,000 refugees that the administration has targeted for Fiscal Year 2017?
- c. Does the State Department intend to ask Congress for additional funds? If so, how much, and when?

Answer:

The Proposed Refugee Admissions for Fiscal Year 2015: Report to the Congress includes a table outlining the total funding available or estimated availabilities to support the program, including the appropriation from Congress, carryover funds, and refugee loan repayment funds, among others. The President's Budget Request to Congress for FY 2016 was \$442.7 million for the Admissions program and included funding for a ceiling of 75,000 refugees. The Administration is currently evaluating the total funding required to admit an additional number of refugees above the 75,000

included in the initial FY 2016 President's Request, and it may require additional resources. The President's FY 2017 Request is still being formulated and the Administration is currently evaluating the total funding required for the program in FY 2017.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#2)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

2. You testified at the hearing that the Department of State has an approximate 80% repayment rate on the loans provided to refugees for travel to the United States.
- a. What is the average loan amount?
 - b. What is the average default amount?
 - c. How much money has the Department of State failed to recover due to defaults on loans provided to refugees over the last ten years?

Answer:

Refugees traveling to the U.S. are offered by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) interest-free travel loans to pay for the costs of their transportation from overseas to U.S. resettlement sites. The average IOM loan amount per refugee is \$1,200 and the average loan note, which includes loans for all members of a refugee family, is \$2,500. The average number of individuals per note is about 2.1.

Approximately 70 percent of all loan amounts are repaid within 5 years and 78 percent of loan amounts are repaid within 10 years. Neither IOM nor the resettlement agencies charge interest, penalties or fees to delinquent loans, nor have they ever initiated legal action through the courts

against any delinquent loan-holder. IOM is responsible for ensuring the financial accountability of the loan program and compliance with all applicable U.S. laws pertaining to debt collection. IOM loans are subject to credit reporting requirements. Refugees can request extensions or changes to payment schedules and terms, if facing hardship. In addition, refugee loans can be canceled based on specific criteria including death, disability, old age, and bankruptcy. A loan is considered to be in default and then is returned to IOM for collection if the loan has not been extended or modified and no payments have been received within four consecutive months. The average default amount is \$1,981.

For \$645 million in loans provided to refugees over the last ten years, \$137 million (or 21 percent) is currently in default status. IOM continues to actively pursue rehabilitation and repayment of these loans including skip tracing, outbound calling, and changing payment schedules and terms.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#3)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

3. According to data available from the Department of State Refugee Processing Center's databases, out of the 1,670 refugees admitted from Syria during Fiscal Year 2015, 29 refugees, or 1.7%, were Christians. Out of the 10,000 refugees from Syria that the administration says it will resettle in Fiscal Year 2016, do you expect a similar percentage of Christians to be admitted to the United States?

Answer:

The United States is committed to assisting people of all ethnicities, religions and nationalities who are fleeing persecution, violence, and other causes of displacement. With regard to resettlement, our emphasis is on admitting the most vulnerable individuals with a well-founded fear of persecution based on one of the five protected grounds (race, religion, nationality, political opinion, and membership in a particular social group) under U.S. law, in a manner that is consistent with U.S. national security.

Since 2011, the United States has admitted over 2,200 Syrian refugees, four percent of whom are members of religious minorities, half of which were Christians. Pre-war demographics indicated that Christians made up around 10 percent of the population in Syria, or approximately 1.8

million Christians. It is unclear how many Christians have left the country, however it is estimated that Christians comprise far fewer than 10 percent of the Syrian refugee population. Based on this data, we expect a similar percentage of Syrian Christians admitted in FY 2016, although it could increase somewhat given planned resumption of refugee processing in Lebanon. (We believe Syrian Christians are more likely to seek refuge in Lebanon than other countries in the region.)

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#4)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

4. How many refugees from Syria do you anticipate will be admitted to the United States over the next five fiscal years through the Refugee Admissions Program?

Answer:

As Secretary Kerry announced in September, the United States would accept at least 85,000 refugees from around the world in Fiscal Year 2016 and at least 100,000 the following year. Of those accepted in 2016, at least 10,000 will be from Syria. He also stated we would be working hard to explore whether we could do more. This step is keeping with America's best tradition as a beacon of hope to those fleeing violence and persecution and a signal of solidarity to our allies and partners around the world. While we do not establish refugee admission targets by nationality five years out due to the emergency nature of refugee crises, in consultation with Congress we will continue to explore ways to increase those figures while maintaining robust security and screening protocols.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#5)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

5. Are members of the public able to attend quarterly consultations with state and local officials regarding refugee resettlement efforts?

Answer:

The Department of State requires resettlement agencies' local affiliates to convene quarterly community consultations with stakeholders in areas of resettlement. In some areas, the State Refugee Coordinator may convene the required quarterly meetings. Through these consultations and other means, the affiliates are able to continually gauge the capacity of the community for refugee resettlement. While the program is operated under federal authority, the resettlement agencies and the Department of State consider carefully the input received from its state and local stakeholders when determining the feasibility and capacity of a refugee resettlement program. Attendance at quarterly meetings is determined locally by meeting organizers.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Jeff Sessions (#6)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

6. When is the last time that the Department of State conducted a financial audit of the private contractors with which it works to provide refugee resettlement services?

Answer:

All Department of State cooperative agreements with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that provide refugee resettlement services require annual independent financial audits under the provisions of the Federal Grant Regulations (2 CFR Part 200 Subpart F –Audit Requirements). Accordingly, each NGO is audited annually.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Can you confirm the following:

- a. That United States government officials have no access to civilian local or municipal records within the sovereign territory of Syria?
- b. That United States government officials have no access to civilian national records within the sovereign territory of Syria?

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the security screening process, records, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#2)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Has the Assad government provided any assistance to help identify Syrian nationals who are asserting refugee status, either by supplying records or offering to verify claims made by alleged Syrian refugees? If the answer is yes, please provide additional details.

Answer:

We have not sought assistance from the Asad regime for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program. The Asad government long ago lost legitimacy and would not be a trusted partner in the screening process.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#3)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Given the likelihood that the Assad government favors the refugee flow (since any legitimate Syrian nationals leaving Syria at this time are likely either opponents of the Assad government or ISIS operatives taking advantage of the refugee flow), would you acknowledge that the Assad government may have an incentive to allow an uncontrolled, unconditional exodus of Syrian nationals from Syria at this time?

Answer:

We believe the primary driver of departure from Syria for the nearly 4.3 million refugees is the Asad regime's nearly five year campaign of terror, barrel bombs, and wanton destruction as well as violence from extremist armed groups. The ongoing conflict in Syria and the destabilizing impact on the broader region and beyond are primary drivers of violent extremism.

Until the conflict in Syria is resolved through a political transition, and the brutality of the Asad regime ends, the country will continue to attract violent extremists and drive away moderates. As we continue to strengthen the international community's counterterrorism efforts, it is important to

properly identify where the risk is greatest to ensure resources are most effectively employed to address the burgeoning risk of violent extremism and terrorism.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#4)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Have any other Middle Eastern or European governments provided any assistance to help identify Syrian nationals who are asserting refugee status, either by supplying records or offering to verify claims made by alleged Syrian refugees? If the answer is yes, please provide additional details.

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the security screening process, records, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#5)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Is it fair to state that, if an individual presents himself or herself to United States officials as a refugee, and asserts to be a Syrian national, but offers no objective or verifiable records or other information that assures identity or nationality, and provides no indication during his or her interview that their story is fabricated, the United States government will accept that refugee's claim that he or she is a Syrian national, without further verification? If the answer is yes, please explain the justification for this position.

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the security screening process, verification of nationality, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#6)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Is it fair to state that, if an individual presents himself or herself to United States officials as a refugee, but offers no objective or verifiable records or other information that assures identity or nationality, and provides no indication during his or her interview that their story is fabricated, and the individual's offered identity does trigger a derogatory hit on any of the security databases that are used to determine terrorist or criminal activity, the United States government will consider that individual to not be a security risk? If the answer is yes, please explain the justification for this position.

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the interview process, records, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#7)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

If an individual presents himself or herself to United States officials as a refugee as part of this flow out of Syria, but is identified as (or admits to being) a citizen of a nation other than Syria, is their application for refugee status automatically denied? If the answer is no, please provide a detailed explanation as to why such applications are not automatically denied.

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the interview process, verification of nationality, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#8)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Please explain what provision of federal law (if any) would prevent United States officials who are involved in reviewing refugee applications from only approving applications of individuals who can demonstrate Syrian citizenship and identity.

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the interview process, verification of nationality, and USCIS approvals and denials.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#9)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Please explain how it is not a massive national security risk to admit individuals to the United States who purport to be Syrian national refugees but can offer no objective or verifiable records or other information to establish their identity or nationality.

Answer:

The security screening process for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, including DHS's Fraud Detection and National Security Directorate, reflects extensive experience screening out misrepresentations of identity and nationality.

All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo the most intensive level of security screening of any category of traveler to the United States involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country.

These safeguards include biometric (fingerprint) and biographic checks, and a lengthy in-depth interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present security concerns to the United States. The classified details of the refugee security screening process are regularly shared with relevant congressional committees.

Any refugee, including Syrians, may only be admitted to the United States after DHS' Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) receives the security checks run by the intelligence and law enforcement communities and all issues are resolved. Only then can USCIS affirmatively determine a refugee is admissible to the United States.

The burden of proof in the refugee application process is on the refugee – the refugee must show he or she qualifies for refugee status. U.S. law and regulations require that applicants provide DHS/USCIS with information that enables our law enforcement and intelligence communities to confirm their identity and assess whether they present a security risk. A lack of derogatory information on an applicant is not in and of itself sufficient evidence to pass the security clearance. If DHS' expert screeners

are not satisfied with the information provided, the applicant will not be permitted to travel to the United States.

Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through yet additional forms of security screening. The screening process is multi-layered and recurrent and involves a rigorous security review. We check extensively against law enforcement and intelligence community holdings—and those holdings are regularly updated and enhanced to ensure we have the most up-to-date and accurate information possible.

DHS has full discretion to deny admission to any refugee including on national security grounds and has done so in numerous cases. DHS' decisions are guided by the key principle directed by the President and affirmed throughout the U.S. government – that the safety and security of the American people must always come first.

For additional details regarding the security screening process, I refer you to DHS.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#10)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

At last week's hearing, your testimony and the testimony of other witnesses made it clear that the United States government's ability to screen the Syrian refugee flow for potential terrorism or national security threats depends almost entirely on their being flagged in an existing domestic or international terrorism or criminal database. While this allays some concerns, it does not address the fundamental reality of the security threat currently posed by ISIS in Syria, given that ISIS is drawing an abundance of recruits who may be local and not previously involved in domestic or international terrorism.

Does the United States government have any way to learn of an individual's possible affiliation with ISIS (or any other terrorist organization) in the absence of either some derogatory database hit or some indication in the course of interviews that the person is not credible?

Answer:

The U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) has a long history of safely admitting refugees from violent conflicts, including where intelligence holdings are limited, and the USRAP has long been mindful of threats posed by al-Qaeda and ISIL. That is precisely why the screening process in place for all refugees, including Syrians, is so robust.

All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo the most intensive level of security screening of any category of traveler to the United States involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country.

These safeguards include biometric (fingerprint) and biographic checks, and a lengthy in-depth interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present security concerns to the United States. The classified details of the refugee security screening process are regularly shared with relevant congressional committees.

The burden of proof in the refugee application process is on the refugee – the refugee must show he or she qualifies for refugee status. U.S. law and regulations require that applicants provide DHS/USCIS with information that enables our law enforcement and intelligence communities to confirm their identity and assess whether they present a security risk. A lack of derogatory information on an applicant is not in and of itself

sufficient evidence to pass the security clearance. If DHS' expert screeners are not satisfied with the information provided, the applicant will not be permitted to travel to the United States.

Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through yet additional forms of security screening. The screening process is multi-layered and recurrent and involves a rigorous security review. We check extensively against law enforcement and intelligence community holdings—and those holdings are regularly updated and enhanced to ensure we have the most up-to-date and accurate information possible.

Any refugee, including Syrian, may only be admitted to the United States after DHS' Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) receives the security checks run by the intelligence and law enforcement communities and all issues are resolved. Only then can USCIS affirmatively determine a refugee is admissible to the United States.

DHS has full discretion to deny admission to any refugee including on national security grounds and has done so in numerous cases. DHS' decisions are guided by the key principle directed by the President and affirmed throughout the U.S. government – that the safety and security of the American people must always come first.

For additional details regarding the security screening process, I refer you to DHS.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#11)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

At last week's hearing, you testified that, as of the date of the hearing, the United States had contributed approximately \$14.5 billion in taxpayer-subsidized monetary aid to the Syrian refugee effort.

Please provide the following information:

- a. Confirmation as to whether that \$14.5 billion amount was the total amount of expenditures for the Syrian refugee effort for Fiscal Year 2015, and, if not what that total amount is for Fiscal Year 2015.
- b. The agency's or agencies' account or accounts from which that funding has been drawn.
- c. The complete list of international organizations and/or relief organizations that have received any amount of this funding.
- d. What sort of accounting, if any, these international organizations and/or relief organizations must supply to the United States government to ensure proper use of the funding.
- e. What restrictions, if any, the United States government has placed on the international organizations and/or relief organizations that are using this funding.

Answer:

- a. Since the start of the crisis, the U.S. government has provided over \$4.5 billion in humanitarian funding to respond to the Syria crisis.
- b. Of the more than \$4.5 billion, over \$1.6 billion was provided in FY 2015. Of this \$1.6 billion in FY 2015, the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) provided over \$752 million in Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA); USAID's Office of Food for Peace (USAID/FFP) provided over \$579 million in International Disaster Assistance (IDA) and Title II funding; and USAID's Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (USAID/OFDA) over \$296 million in IDA. This assistance helped provide shelter, access to clean water, life-saving emergency medical care, food, protection, and other necessities to millions of Syrian refugees and conflict victims. U.S. assistance also encouraged other nations to step up and contribute to international relief efforts as well.
- c. Recipients of U.S. government funding in FY 2015 to address the Syria humanitarian crisis are: The World Food Program, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, The United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the International Committee of the Red Cross, the

International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the International Labor Organization, and numerous non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

d. United Nations and other international organizations must implement and comply with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and other internationally recognized generally accepted auditing standards for financial accounting and reporting. Contribution agreements, including grants, require UN and other international organizations to carry out the funded activities in accordance with the organizations' established policies and procedures, and that all program and financial reports concerning funded activities be provided to donors as well as copies of annual external audit reports. Organizations must provide programmatic updates, financial reporting, and annual and/or final reports. UN organizations must maintain such financial records for at least three years after the recipient's final disbursement of funds under the award. All Department of State and

USAID cooperative agreements and grants with NGOs include specific terms and conditions for carrying out the funded activities and require periodic financial and program reporting and annual independent financial audits under the provisions of the Federal Grant Regulations (2 CFR Part 200).

e. All contributions, grants, and cooperative agreements contain language that recipients take reasonable efforts to ensure that no U.S. funding is used to provide support to individuals or entities associated with terrorism. U.S. contributions to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East are conditioned on the Agency taking “all possible measures” to ensure that no U.S. funding supports terrorists or supporters of terrorism, as required by section 301(c) of the Foreign Assistance Act, as amended.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#12)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

At last week's hearing, it was expressed that the United States was under a moral obligation to receive unspecified thousands of Syrian refugees, in large part because other nations (mostly, European and Middle Eastern nations) were apparently bearing the brunt of receipt of these refugees. It was suggested that the United States needs to do its part in accepting some percentage of these refugees because of the volume of refugees and the negative impact that volume is having on the region.

Please provide the following information regarding the recent unaccompanied alien child (UAC) influx at the U.S.-Mexico border:

- a. How many UAC were received by European Union (EU) nations during the UAC influx over the last few years (broken down by nation and fiscal year).
- b. How much financial aid or support EU nations sent to the United States to support the UAC influx over the last few years (broken down by nation and fiscal year).
- c. How many UAC were received by Middle Eastern or Central Asian nations during the UAC influx over the last few years (broken down by nation and fiscal year).
- d. How much financial aid or support Middle Eastern or Central Asian nations sent to the United States to support the UAC influx over the last few years (broken down by nation and fiscal year).

Answer:

The United States did not receive bilateral assistance from other nations to respond to the increased number of unaccompanied migrant children arriving to the United States or to develop and implement the Central American Minors program.

Other nations may offer support to the region to respond to the displacement of unaccompanied minors through bilateral assistance, assistance to international organizations, and/or funding to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

The European Union (EU) has provided funding to UNHCR for Children of Peace programs in Guatemala and Mexico. In addition, many donors, including Asian and EU countries, support UNHCR and IOM through funding that is not earmarked to particular populations to allow them the needed flexibility to respond to crises as they occur and develop.

We are not aware of unaccompanied refugee minors from Latin America resettled to EU, Central Asian, or Middle Eastern nations.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#13)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Are you aware of whether the United States has raised the issue of acceptance of Syrian refugees with either the government of the People's Republic of China or the government of the Russian Federation?

Answer:

The U.S. government has a multi-pronged approach to engaging with our overseas partners regarding the Syria conflict, including refugee-related matters. In this context, the U.S. government engages regularly with the international community, including the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the People's Republic of China. In addition, we are working in collaboration with like-minded countries regarding the refugee and migration crisis stemming from the Syria civil war and helping the international community develop an effective humanitarian response. We continue to urge all countries to treat refugees with dignity and respect, and to uphold their human rights.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#14)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Given that the Russian Federation now has a heavy combat role in Syria (and is theoretically contributing to the refugee outflow as a result of its military operations), should the Russian Federation have a greater role in the acceptance of Syrian refugees?

Answer:

Russia's expanded military presence in Syria has contributed to increased displacement in Syria since October. As various U.S. officials have repeatedly told their Russian counterparts, attempting to end the civil war by military action will only cause greater violence and create further displacement, human casualties, human suffering, and destruction of institutions and public services. Furthermore, Russia's presence in Syria is prolonging Asad's rule, which only serves to exacerbate the refugee crisis and attract more fighters to the ISIL cause. As we have long held, there is no military solution to the civil war in Syria. Until the conflict in Syria is resolved through a political transition, and the brutality of the Asad regime ends, refugees will continue to flee from both the Asad regime's brutality

and ISIL. This is why it is so critical that we keep the momentum of the International Syria Support Group and to convene Syrian government and opposition representatives in formal negotiations under UN auspices and in accordance with the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

We are aware that there are several thousand Syrian refugees currently residing in, or transiting through, Russia. We continue to urge all countries to treat refugees with dignity and respect, and to uphold their human rights.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#15)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

In conversations with congressional staff, it has emerged that the Department of State is defending its low number of admissions for Syrian Christian refugees on the ground that most Syrian Christian refugees have fled directly to Lebanon, and that the United States embassy in Beirut lacks the physical, personnel, or resource capacity to process refugees in Lebanon.

Please provide a more detailed explanation about the Department of State's physical, personnel, and resource capacity limitations at the U.S. Embassy in Beirut and U.S. consulates in Lebanon.

Answer:

Due to security conditions and space constraints at Embassy Beirut, the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program has not been able to conduct refugee admission interviews since September 2014. We have a path to resolving those challenges and plan to resume refugee interviews in early 2016. Our goal is to admit 1,000 refugees from Lebanon in FY 2016, including a large number of Syrians.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Ted Cruz (#16)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

What additional Department of State resources can be leveraged in order to facilitate or expand the processing of Syrian Christian refugees in Lebanon and/or elsewhere in the region?

Answer:

The safety and treatment of members of religious and ethnic minorities in the region are issues of long-standing concern for the Department.

Along with our partners, we are taking steps to improve the capacity of the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program to meet the increased admissions targets in the coming years and to ensure all affected populations, including those from religious minorities, have access to the program.

We plan to resume refugee admissions processing in Lebanon in early 2016, which will include Syrian Christian referrals.

We are also working with the UN and other organizations to establish a P-1 (individual referral) program for extremely vulnerable women and

girls from religious minorities, including Yezidis in northern Iraq. We plan to commence the identification process this month and begin interviewing cases in the January-February timeframe.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator David Vitter (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Background: You told ABC News, “One of the fundamental principles of our country is that we care about others. We will help others.” You also said every refugee is vetted through an “intense” system. In fact, PRM Assistant Secretary Anne C. Richard listed as a “Fiscal Year 2014 Accomplishment” that “PRM, DHS, and law enforcement and intelligence agencies successfully protected the refugee admissions program from infiltration by bad actors.” However, Chairman Sessions mentioned during this October 1, 2015, hearing that FBI Assistant Director of Counterterrorism Michael Steinbach on February 11, 2015, before the House Committee on Homeland Security, expressed significant concerns with screening Syrian refugees. Steinbach testified, “The concern in Syria is that we don’t have systems in places on the ground to collect information to vet. . . . the concern is we would be vetting databases that don’t hold information on those individuals. . . . You’re talking about a country that is a failed state. That is, does not have any infrastructure . . . so all of the datasets – the police, the intel services – that normally you would go to seek information don’t exist.” However, you testified, “I can assure you, on our side, there will be no shortcuts on security. There will be no shortcuts on medical screening. There will be no shortcuts on processing. . . . There will be no shortcuts on our responsibilities to the American people.”

- a. Is FBI’s Assistant Director of Counterterrorism incorrect? Do we have systems in place on the ground in Syria to collect enough information to properly screen refugees?
- b. Approximately how many hours of the 18-to-24-month admission process is a U.S. official actively working on vetting a particular individual?
- c. How can PRM be so confident this intense vetting process completely eliminated the threat of ISIS infiltration in the Syrian Refugee

program in 2014?

- d. Does PRM have the same absolute confidence it will prevent ISIS terrorists from infiltrating the refugee program indefinitely?
- e. What is the foundation for this assertion?
- f. What additional resources do you have to meet this new ceiling of 85,000?
- g. What sacrifices will you be forced to make to meet this new ceiling, and won't that negatively affect your assurances of national security?

Answer:

The Administration remains deeply committed to safeguarding the American people while providing refuge to the world's most vulnerable. The Administration made the decision to participate in the global effort to resettle Syrian refugees only after concluding that we could do so safely and consistent with U.S. national security. This remains our guiding principle.

President Obama and Secretary Kerry are determined to ensure that the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) meets the highest security standards. This Administration has taken a number of steps in recent years to further intensify our already rigorous refugee screening. The U.S. government screens refugees while they are still overseas, long before they are potentially admitted to the United States, in a process that is intensive and deliberate.

The USRAP has a long history of safely admitting refugees from violent conflicts, and the USRAP has long been mindful of threats posed by al-Qaeda and ISIL. That is precisely why the screening process in place for all refugees, including Syrians, is so robust.

All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo the most intensive level of security screening of any category of traveler to the United States involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country.

These safeguards include biometric (fingerprint) and biographic checks, and a lengthy in-depth interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present security concerns to the United States. (The classified details of the refugee security screening process are regularly shared with relevant Congressional Committees.)

The burden of proof in the refugee application process is on the refugee – the refugee must show he or she qualifies for refugee status. U.S.

law and regulations requires that each applicant provides DHS/USCIS with information that better enables our law enforcement and intelligence communities to confirm their identity and assess whether they present a security risk to the country. If DHS' highly trained Refugee Corps officers are not satisfied with the information provided, the applicant will not be permitted to travel to the United States. A lack of derogatory information on an applicant is not in and of itself sufficient evidence to pass the security clearance.

Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through yet additional forms of security screening. The screening process is multi-layered and recurrent and involves a rigorous security review. We check extensively against law enforcement and intelligence community holdings—and those holdings are regularly updated and enhanced to ensure we have the most current and accurate information possible.

DHS has full discretion to deny admission to any refugee including on national security grounds and has done so in numerous cases. DHS' decisions are guided by the key principle directed by the President and affirmed throughout the U.S. government – that the safety and security of the American people must always come first.

All refugees, including Syrians, may only be admitted to the U.S. after DHS/USCIS receives the security checks undertaken by the intelligence and law enforcement communities and all issues are resolved. Only then does DHS/USCIS affirmatively determine they are admissible to the U.S.

While the U.S. Department of State manages the USRAP, the U.S. Department of Homeland Security manages the federal interagency screening process and only DHS has the authority to grant refugee admission on an individual basis. For additional questions regarding the screening process, we would refer you to DHS.

For additional information on the refugee resettlement process you may wish to consult DHS' detailed guide to the process at the following link: *<http://www.uscis.gov/refugeescreening>*.

The Administration is currently evaluating the total funding required to admit additional refugees above the 75,000 included in the FY 2016 President's Request.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Amy Klobuchar (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

1. Questions for Mr. Bartlett, Ms. Strack, Mr. Emrich

How extensive would you say our security screenings for refugee admissions are in comparison to the security screenings provided to other groups of people entering the United States?

Are refugees among the most carefully vetted of all travelers to the United States?

Answer:

All refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo the most intensive level of security screening of any category of traveler to the United States involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense, in order to ensure that those admitted are not known to pose a threat to our country.

These safeguards include biometric (fingerprint) and biographic checks, and a lengthy in-person overseas interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual

circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present security concerns to the United States. The classified details of the refugee security screening process are regularly shared with relevant Congressional Committees.

All refugees, including Syrians, may only be admitted to the U.S. after DHS/USCIS receives the security checks undertaken by the intelligence and law enforcement communities and all issues are resolved. Only if DHS/USCIS affirmatively determines refugees are admissible are they allowed to travel to the United States.

The burden of proof in the refugee application process is on the refugee – the refugee must show he or she qualifies for refugee status. U.S. law and regulations require that each applicant provides DHS/USCIS with information that better enables our law enforcement and intelligence communities to confirm their identity and assess whether they present a security risk to the country. If DHS' highly trained Refugee Corps officers are not satisfied with the information provided, the applicant will not be permitted to travel to the United States. A lack of derogatory information on an applicant is not in and of itself sufficient evidence to pass the security clearance.

Mindful of the particular conditions of the Syria crisis, Syrian refugees go through yet additional forms of security screening. The screening process is multi-layered and recurrent, and involves a rigorous security review. We check extensively against law enforcement and intelligence community holdings—and those holdings are regularly updated and enhanced to ensure we have the most up-to-date and accurate information possible.

Our highest priority is the protection of the American people. We are committed to maintaining the integrity of the refugee vetting process even as we fulfill our moral responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance in the face of this historic refugee crisis.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Richard Blumenthal (#1)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

Could screenings be better timed to avoid needless duplication and delay?

As several of the witnesses discuss in their testimony, applicants for resettlement in the United States go through a number of different screenings. As I understand it, these screenings generally have a limited validity period. If a certain amount of time has passed since the screening and an applicant has not resettled in the United States, the screening expires and the applicant has to start over. It is possible that a refugee could be delayed through no fault of her own if one screening expires before another can be completed, and the refugee has to endure the hassle, the expense, and the delay associated with completing the same screening twice. In some cases, an entire family could have their screenings expire while they wait for one family member to get final approval.

- a. This question is for whoever can speak to the issue. It may be a few of you. Is the Administration considering ways to better time the resettlement application process to ensure that applicants do not have to needlessly go through the same screenings multiple times?
- b. This seems like an area where the resettlement process could be made more efficient without any cost in terms of security. I would like to work with you on this. Would you keep me updated?

Answer:

The Administration continues to identify efficiency measures to streamline refugee admissions processing while still upholding rigorous security vetting requirements. Prior to travel, refugees undergo a wide range

of security checks and need to clear a medical exam. Each of these checks has different validity periods, and some checks are initiated at different time periods throughout the process. The Administration is reviewing the end-to-end processing workflow to identify where processing can be made more efficient. We are also working to develop more rigorous data analytics to guide when checks should be re-requested to try to maximize the potential for an approved, cleared refugee to travel to the United State before another check expires.

We appreciate your interest and will keep Congress apprised of improvements to the refugee admissions process.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Richard Blumenthal (#2)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

What happens when an entire family is delayed because a single family member has not been approved?

As you know, families frequently apply to resettle together. For a family to be accepted, each member must be screened and approved. I have heard concerns that, as a result, entire families will often be stalled because a single family member's application has gotten delayed.

- a. How often does that kind of thing happen—where a family is held up because of a single family member or maybe two family members?
- b. Do you have a process for expediting consideration of particular applicants when clearing one applicant would allow an entire family to move forward? Can you describe that process? How often do you use it?

It seems to me that, if an entire family is delayed because of a single family member, the family might want to know what is going on. Then the family could choose whether to continue their application as a group or to let the approved members of the family move forward and leave the delayed member to follow them later.

- c. Do you inform families when the whole family has been stalled because the application of a particular family member has been delayed?
- d. If not, would you be willing to consider doing so?

Answer:

The Administration recognizes the challenges that families face when their cases are delayed. When a case is delayed due to a single family member, it is most commonly due to potential concerns related to the security vetting checks for the family member. In this scenario, a case cannot move forward to travel until the Department of Homeland Security makes a final adjudication on the case, including the security checks. If there is a negative vetting determination made for one member of the family, the case for the entire family is closed and no one in the family can travel to the United States as a refugee.

For cases with urgent protection needs, there is a process for expediting the final adjudication of the case, including the disposition of the security checks. However, if the final determination is a denial for even one individual on a case, the denial will apply to all members of a case.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Richard Blumenthal (#3)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

What did you learn in Irbil about the treatment of Iraqi religious minorities?

Mr. Bartlett, as you likely know, I recently led a letter to Secretary Kerry concerning the protection of Iraqi religious minorities and the need to improve Iraqi refugee processing times. In particular, my colleagues and I requested Secretary Kerry to designate a Priority Two (P2) category for the persecuted religious minorities in Iraq. Further, we asked the State Department to accelerate processing times by: 1) doubling the number of personnel tasked with processing Iraqi refugees; 2) working with DHS to explore videoconferencing capabilities for interviewing refugees; 3) identifying non-governmental organizations to work with the U.S. Embassy to identify and screen religious minorities seeking in-country refugee assistance; and 4) establishing a facility in Irbil where refugee applicants can be processed.

I am aware that you traveled to Irbil a few weeks ago to meet with international organizations and explore options to address the overwhelming number of refugees.

- a. What were the major lessons or points you took away from this trip?

Answer:

Following my trip to Erbil, we moved forward in working with the UN and other organizations to establish a P-1 (individual referral) program for a small number of extremely vulnerable women and girls from religious minorities, including Yezidis in northern Iraq. We plan to commence the

identification process this month and begin interviewing cases in the January-February timeframe. We plan to have quarterly interview teams in Erbil throughout 2016.

**Questions for the Record Submitted to
Director Larry Bartlett
Senator Richard Blumenthal (#4)
Senate Judiciary Committee
October 1, 2015**

Question:

How many IACs are stuck in limbo, and how can that be resolved?

As you know, applicants for resettlement go through a screening known as the Interagency Check, or IAC. This process is in addition to a number of other biographic and biometric checks that applicants have to undergo. My understanding is that sometimes IACs are, at least initially, inconclusive. Applicants get back a determination of “not cleared” or “no decision”—meaning they have been neither approved nor denied. I have heard concerns that applicants who have gotten a determination of “not cleared” or “no decision” are left in limbo and not given a chance to clear up whatever ambiguity led to them receiving an inconclusive check.

- a. As of today, how many applicants for resettlement have gotten a determination of “not cleared” or “no decision” but not yet had their cases resolved?
- b. Do you give applicants the opportunity to provide information you need to move their cases from inconclusive to resolved?
- c. Would you look into whether more can be done to let resettlement applicants help clarify any ambiguities in their checks—provided they can do so without accessing classified materials?

Answer:

The Department of Homeland Security’s U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is responsible for determining the eligibility and admissibility of applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and

is therefore best placed to answer questions regarding the security screening process and USCIS approvals and denials.