

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22

HOMELAND SECURITY EXPERTS GROUP (HSEG)

2021 HOMELAND SECURITY ENTERPRISE FORUM

PLENARY SESSION 3:

THE HOMELAND ENTERPRISE: NOW AND THE WAY AHEAD

WITH SECRETARY ALEJANDRO MAYORKAS, DHS

Salamander Resort

Middleburg, Virginia

Monday, September 13, 2021

1 Plenary Session 3 - The Homeland Security Enterprise:

2 Now and the Way Ahead

3  
4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, just real quick  
5 while we're waiting on the technical glitch to work  
6 out, please again fill in, we've got seats open and  
7 available. If you're standing in the back, you don't  
8 need to be. And furthermore, reminder that after this  
9 is the welcome reception, all are invited out to the  
10 Culinary Garden. And then tomorrow morning 8:00  
11 o'clock we start up right here live with a review of  
12 the counterterrorism threat from Tom Sanderson. So,  
13 with that I understand we are now connected. Elaine?

14 MS. DUKE: All right. Thank you.

15 Well, good evening, everyone. It's just  
16 wonderful to be here with you today at such a critical  
17 juncture of our homeland security, and to introduce the  
18 session with DHS Secretary, Mayorkas, and Mr. Luke  
19 Barr, here to my left, Justice and Homeland Security  
20 Reporter and Producer for ABC News, who will be our  
21 moderator this evening.

22 Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us this

1 morning here and again this evening. And Mr. Barr,  
2 welcome.

3 In introducing this chat about now and the way  
4 ahead, I want to talk briefly about partnerships. DHS  
5 was formed on the basis of partnerships. And Secretary  
6 Mayorkas leads DHS today with that same partnership  
7 approach. The National Incident Management System  
8 spells out roles for a coordinated national effort,  
9 with responsibilities for all levels of government  
10 across the United States, but not just for federal,  
11 state, local and tribal government. The NIMS also  
12 spells out roles for nongovernmental organizations and  
13 the private sector in preparing for, responding and  
14 recovering for incidents.

15 When you look at every insignificant incident  
16 since 9/11, DHS has been front and center with  
17 solutions, but never alone, always with partnerships.  
18 That is why Deloitte has sponsored this forum today.  
19 And that's why all of us in the room, whether we're  
20 from private sector, NGOs, or government are here  
21 because we recognize the importance in all parts of the  
22 Homeland Security Enterprise coming together with

1 individual and collective expertise and practices to  
2 protect our homeland.

3           Now moving on to a personal partnership, my  
4 relationship with Secretary Mayorkas. It began in 2009  
5 when I was Undersecretary for Management, and he was  
6 the incoming director of USCIS. We are immediately  
7 bound by a devotion to the mission and an allegiance to  
8 our country. Since that first day, he has continued to  
9 demonstrate his passion for public service and  
10 willingness to embrace partnerships to accomplish DHS'  
11 complicated mission set.

12           Another key event in our partnership is from a  
13 little known tradition in DHS in which each deputy  
14 secretary signs over a picture of the aftermath of 9/11  
15 Twin Towers attack to the new deputy secretary, and  
16 that picture is hung in the deputy secretary's office.

17           As former deputy secretary, Ali, signed that  
18 picture over to me when I re-entered office. That  
19 picture of the fallen Twin Towers reminds us of the  
20 need for, and the value of Homeland Security  
21 Enterprise, public sector, government and NGOs, our  
22 partnership, our passion. While that picture hangs in

1 one person's office, it belongs to all of us, and spurs  
2 us forward as the Homeland Security Enterprise to make  
3 sure that never happens again. Thank you.

4 (Applause)

5 MR. BARR: Wow! Beautiful. Thank you,  
6 Elaine. Thank you so much. Thank you, Rob, for having  
7 us and hosting us today. I'm going to try and keep the  
8 session short so that everybody can get to dinner and  
9 then, more importantly, cocktails afterwards, so.

10 And now I'd like to welcome Secretary Mayorkas  
11 who's joining us virtually. Welcome, Mr. Secretary.

12 MR. MAYORKAS: Thanks so much, Luke. And  
13 Elaine, thank you for the introduction. I had a great,  
14 great, multiple hour morning meeting with everyone in  
15 the Homeland Security Enterprise Group. And I very  
16 much appreciate the generosity of time that everyone  
17 gave me and especially of the candor of everyone's  
18 thoughts. And really just a fantastic meeting.

19 MR. BARR: Wonderful. Well, Mr. Secretary, I  
20 wanted to start by looking back for a moment. We just  
21 had the 20th anniversary of 9/11. And so, much of the  
22 department's origins are tied to that day. Where were

1 you on 9/11? And how did the event shape your  
2 perspective in decisions you made as a deputy  
3 secretary, and now the secretary?

4 MR. MAYORKAS: I was home in Los Angeles,  
5 California, at the time, with my wife, and our infant  
6 daughter. And my attention turned first to the health  
7 and safety of my youngest brother who lived in New York  
8 City at the time. And once I made contact with him, of  
9 course, my attention turned to the health and well  
10 being of others and the tragedy that so many were  
11 suffering.

12 I have always loved public service. And that  
13 event really widened my aperture of devotion to public  
14 service. I grew up in the Department of Justice, but  
15 really thereafter increased my focus on our national  
16 security and well being of our home.

17 MR. BARR: And can you talk a little bit about  
18 why you like and have such a passion for public  
19 service? Is it something in your origin story that has  
20 really kick-started this need to serve the public?

21 MR. MAYORKAS: You know, both of my parents  
22 have (inaudible) my mother fled the Holocaust, from

1 Romania to France to Cuba as a refugee. My father lost  
2 the country of his birth, his business, and where he  
3 had intended to and hoped to raise his young family, in  
4 Havana, Cuba. Both of them came to this United States  
5 with my sister and me in tow because of what this  
6 country represented to them. They wanted to raise  
7 their family in a democracy. And it is out of that  
8 abiding respect what this country gave to us, and what  
9 this country has given us so many others that I wanted  
10 to dedicate my career to.

11 MR. BARR: Yeah, and I do want to talk about  
12 sort of the threats to the homeland and how they've  
13 evolved from 9/11 to now. Can you talk a little bit  
14 about those threats from 9/11 briefly?

15 MR. MAYORKAS: Sure. So, in the immediate  
16 aftermath of 9/11, we were, I think, ensuing  
17 approximately 10, perhaps more years, the focus was on  
18 foreign terrorist fighter. The individual who sought  
19 to penetrate our defenses entered the United States to  
20 do us harm.

21 That evolved in the second decade to really  
22 the most prominent threat became the homegrown violent

1 extremists. The individual already resident in the  
2 United States who was radicalized by a foreign  
3 terrorist organization's ideology and sought to do  
4 people harm here.

5 Over the last several years we've seen that  
6 threat evolve once again. We consider the greatest  
7 threat to the homeland, the greatest terrorist-related  
8 threat to the homeland to be the domestic violent  
9 extremists. The individual or loosely affiliated group  
10 of individuals who, based on an ideology of hate, or  
11 false narratives, propagated by social media or other  
12 online platforms are driven to violence.

13 That doesn't mean that prior iterations in the  
14 threat landscape or on the threat landscape have  
15 disappeared or that we no longer pay attention to them,  
16 but rather the evolution has changed, what has become  
17 over the years the most prominent among the terrorism  
18 among us.

19 MR. BARR: Are there any constant threads that  
20 you see between, you know, the foreign terrorist  
21 organizations that we have been fighting and continue  
22 to fight and domestic violent extremists of today?

1           MR. MAYORKAS: I would say ideologies of  
2 extremists would be the thread. And then, of course,  
3 the connectivity balance which has really been  
4 (phonetic).

5           MR. BARR: Yeah. I do want to move on to  
6 Afghanistan, and DHS' role in Afghanistan, and the  
7 resettlement of Afghans. Last month, the President put  
8 the Department in charge of helping Afghans resettle to  
9 the United States. The mission has faced numerous  
10 challenges. What are you doing to make the process run  
11 more efficiently and more safely?

12           MR. MAYORKAS: So, a couple of things. Let me  
13 lay out the process, if I may, because this is a post-  
14 evacuation process, if you will. What we have done as  
15 a government is departments of Defense, State and  
16 Homeland Security have negotiated with allies to serve  
17 as transit countries, places where the Afghan nationals  
18 can reside for a short period of time while we conduct  
19 our security screening and vetting, before they are  
20 resettled in the United States and of course in other  
21 countries as well.

22           Then, once our screening and vetting is

1 accomplished there, it's a -- as everyone knows, it's  
2 an ongoing process, it's a recurrent vetting process.  
3 They are brought to the United States, screening and  
4 vetting continues. Their immediate needs are addressed  
5 in two ports of entry, Dallas and Philadelphia  
6 airports.

7           They are then taken to a facility where they  
8 can be vaccinated, they've been COVID tested, food,  
9 change of clothes, counseling. The immediate, you  
10 know, the immediate needs are addressed. And then  
11 brought, if they do not have family, friends or other  
12 infrastructure here in the United States, brought to  
13 military facilities where their (inaudible) are needed  
14 and they are on the road to resettlement.

15           We're working very, very closely with civil  
16 society, nonprofit organization, state, local  
17 municipalities, really in all-of-America effort to  
18 achieve safe (inaudible) and humane resettlement of  
19 tens of thousands of people.

20           MR. BARR: And I did want to get that number  
21 from you. Do you know how many Afghans have fully  
22 resettled into the United States?

1           MR. MAYORKAS: So, it's a pretty fluid number,  
2 I would say, of approximately 60,000 Afghans that have  
3 been brought to the United States not yet resettled.  
4 We have about 54,000 in the military facilities.

5           MR. BARR: And some of those, some may not  
6 know our unaccompanied children. How does that happen?  
7 How do unaccompanied children make their way to the  
8 United States? And what does reunifying them look  
9 like?

10          MR. MAYORKAS: So, remember, an unaccompanied  
11 child under the law, under the TVPRA may be a young  
12 child who comes with a family member but that family  
13 member is not a parent or legal guardian. It may be a  
14 grandparent and a sibling of majority age, an aunt or  
15 an uncle, and that child is under the law considered an  
16 unaccompanied child.

17           And so, you can imagine how in a traumatic,  
18 very often traumatic evacuation that child very well  
19 might have lost parents, the parents might not be able  
20 to join in the -- at evacuation. It could be a wide  
21 variety of circumstances that brings an unaccompanied  
22 child here. It could also be a child orphaned by

1 reason of the situation in Afghanistan who comes with  
2 no family at all. But because of that acute  
3 vulnerability, we, United States, have saved that child  
4 and brought that child to (inaudible).

5 One of the things that we're working on now is  
6 seeing what we can do to not -- if that child is in  
7 fact with a responsible family member who is not an  
8 adult, I'm sorry, not a parent or legal guardian,  
9 nevertheless keep that child with the family relative  
10 by reason of the trauma that is most likely already  
11 been endured and not to separate that child from a  
12 nonparent, nonlegal guardian sponsored family.

13 MR. BARR: Okay. And we talked about the most  
14 innocent, the children, but let's talk about some  
15 nefarious actors. I'm curious, what assurances you  
16 have for the American public that bad actors will not  
17 infiltrate this resettlement effort.

18 MR. MAYORKAS: No, this is what we do across  
19 the federal enterprise. It's not just a DHS  
20 responsibility. We work in partnership with our law  
21 enforcement, counterterrorism and intelligence agency  
22 partners to conduct a multilayered screening. We check

1 multiple databases. So, we conduct screening and  
2 vetting. And we do it in a recurrent way. And we  
3 gather more information about the individuals. It's an  
4 ongoing process. And our screening and vetting  
5 includes the information as we continue to gather. So,  
6 we're as robust and thorough as our architecture can  
7 permit. So, we do the best we can.

8           We have encountered a few individuals here in  
9 the United States as to whom there's information that  
10 needs to be more thoroughly vetted and resolved. And  
11 we're addressing them and not admitting them until that  
12 resolution is moved.

13           MR. BARR: Do you have a number as to how many  
14 people have been vetted? And if they don't meet that  
15 criteria, what then happens to them? Do you send them  
16 overseas? What happens?

17           MR. MAYORKAS: Well, Luke, we have been  
18 screened and vetted everyone who's come to the United  
19 States. They're really -- if a -- an individual is  
20 here, has not yet been admitted and as of whom there is  
21 information that requires resolution, we have a number  
22 of options available to us. We can indeed obtain the

1 individual's consent to the voluntary return of that  
2 individual to one of the transit countries, or we can  
3 place that individual in immigration proceedings while  
4 we undergo the resolution process. We also of course  
5 avail ourselves of secondary screening in that  
6 capacity.

7 MR. BARR: And I just wanted to make clear,  
8 are there people that have come to the United States  
9 that have been deemed a security risk?

10 MR. MAYORKAS: There have been people who have  
11 been (inaudible) to the United States as to whom we  
12 have received information that requires us to dig  
13 deeper and resolve.

14 MR. BARR: And from -- go ahead.

15 MR. MAYORKAS: And let me -- you know, just to  
16 be clear, it may not be a national security threat, per  
17 se. It may be information that is derogatory, of a  
18 different variety, but we want to resolve it before we  
19 admit that individual into the United States. That's  
20 our commitment.

21 MR. BARR: And what derogatory, what does that  
22 derogatory information look like?

1           MR. MAYORKAS: Well, it could be, for example,  
2 an individual who appears to have, might have petty  
3 events that we look at, and superficially we assess as  
4 a petty offense, but it's a petty offense committed in  
5 Afghanistan and we've got some study to do to make sure  
6 that our understanding of it is indeed accurate. And  
7 the offense does not create for us an understanding  
8 that the individual poses a public safety threat of  
9 whom we cannot admit into the United States. We just  
10 have to dig. That's what we do.

11           MR. BARR: And I just wanted to get one more  
12 question on Afghanistan, in -- before we move on to  
13 domestic violent extremism, which I know is a topic  
14 that you care deeply about. But do you believe the  
15 lack of U.S. presence in Afghanistan makes us  
16 vulnerable to an attack because there's significantly a  
17 reduced intelligence presence there?

18           MR. MAYORKAS: So, I don't, because I think  
19 that we have different means of gathering information  
20 and intelligence throughout.

21           MR. BARR: And I want to move on to...

22           MR. MAYORKAS: So, I...

1 MR. BARR: Go ahead.

2 MR. MAYORKAS: I don't want to -- what I mean  
3 to say is, I think the suggestion that we lost  
4 visibility I think is an overstatement. Whether our  
5 visibility has been reduced, we no longer are present,  
6 so yes, indeed, it has, that's I think axiomatic. But  
7 one should not think that we've lost all visibility.

8 MR. BARR: Fair enough. I do want to move on  
9 to domestic violent extremism because our time is  
10 limited. You said at the outset that domestic violent  
11 extremists pose the biggest threat to the homeland.  
12 And the department has put a priority on domestic  
13 violent extremists, especially after January 6th. Why  
14 do you feel that they are the biggest threat to the  
15 homeland that we are facing right now?

16 MR. MAYORKAS: So, Luke, I would say, and I  
17 apologize if I misspoke. I would say that that poses  
18 the most significant terrorism related threat to the  
19 homeland. I do want to make that amendment. Because I  
20 think that watching, studying the threat streams, the  
21 information and intelligence suggests that this is the  
22 greatest threat.

1           And it's a function of a few things  
2     operationally too, if I may. Number one -- and this is  
3     what makes it difficult. Number one, we're talking  
4     about lone actors or loosely affiliated individuals.  
5     And number two, we're talking about individuals who  
6     propagate the ideologies and might be radicalized by  
7     the ideologies to violence through increasingly  
8     encrypted platforms.

9           So, between the lone actor and the loose  
10    affiliation on the one hand and the use of encrypted  
11    platforms, it becomes a challenge for law enforcement  
12    and the intelligence community to understand with  
13    precision the threat landscape and what is possibly  
14    material.

15           MR. BARR: And you mentioned lone actors, and  
16    I want to drill down on lone actors for a minute,  
17    because I think some of the misconception is that DHS  
18    has broad latitude to see everything coming. With lone  
19    actors, it's really difficult. So, can you talk about  
20    why lone actors are so incredibly dangerous? It's just  
21    one person.

22           MR. MAYORKAS: Well, because it's more

1 difficult to track than perhaps an organization that  
2 has a structure to it, a form to it that involves more  
3 people and more tentacles, and more tentacles creates  
4 potentially greater visibility for us on the one hand.  
5 I should say that we as a department, what we do is we  
6 review public-facing material, and then we leverage  
7 other resources such as academic research, Think Tank  
8 research, to gain a better, wider and deeper  
9 understanding of what is being propagated on different  
10 platforms.

11 MR. BARR: That's interesting. I want to talk  
12 about what, something that former President, George  
13 Bush, said on September 11th. He essentially compared  
14 domestic violent extremists to some of the atrocities  
15 that we saw on 9/11, saying they're "children of the  
16 same foul spirit". Curious what you make of that  
17 statement.

18 MR. MAYORKAS: I want to give that statement  
19 some thought. I think that individuals who are  
20 radicalized by the false narratives or ideologies of  
21 hate that commit violent acts, I, you know, condemn  
22 that with all the strength and vigor of this

1 department. It is a complicated landscape. We see  
2 elements of pure criminality. And we also see elements  
3 that combine criminal acts with significant mental  
4 health issues. And so, it's a challenging landscape  
5 that we are obligated to and permitted to address.  
6 It's -- it should not be described as simple or  
7 straight forward.

8 MR. BARR: And all the while, you have to  
9 balance the personal privacies and constitutionalities  
10 of it all, correct?

11 MR. MAYORKAS: I think, you know, it's  
12 interesting, I had a discussion earlier today, we  
13 talked about what's balance, is the appropriate term.  
14 I think that we have to safeguard our constitutional  
15 principles and individual's rights to privacy.

16 MR. BARR: Yeah. I do want to ask about, and  
17 I know for those in the room there were some talk with  
18 Governor Hogan about September 18th. You know, January  
19 6 was an intelligence failure by some estimation.

20 On Saturday, as many people in this room know,  
21 there are -- there was a planned rally for those in  
22 support of jailed January 6th defendants. Is DHS

1 confident that we won't see the same situation repeat  
2 itself on Saturday, as we did on January 6th, and what  
3 is the department doing about it?

4 MR. MAYORKAS: So, I think we've passed the  
5 federal enterprise and frankly global enterprise  
6 (inaudible) have learned from past events. We have  
7 been pushing out information to our state, local tribal  
8 territorial partners on the one hand. We've issued an  
9 (inaudible) bulletin back in January that has been  
10 renewed since we've been pushing out products with the  
11 FBI perspective, what we are seeing so that local law  
12 enforcement is equipped with the information that we  
13 have, and those in the National Capital Region have  
14 learned from January 6, and to exercise appropriate  
15 procedures and protocols to address any gathering that  
16 is driven to the violence and unrest.

17 MR. BARR: Is this something that you're  
18 concerned about on Saturday?

19 MR. MAYORKAS: It's my job to be concerned  
20 about everything..

21 (Laughter)

22 MR. BARR: Fair enough. Fair enough.

1 MR. MAYORKAS: Yeah, I wouldn't skew Saturday  
2 from that panoply of concerns.

3 MR. BARR: Fair enough. I do want to ask  
4 about the role DHS should be playing in monitoring and  
5 curbing violent, prone domestic extremists. You  
6 touched about it a little bit, but what is the role of  
7 DHS monitoring DVEs.

8 MR. MAYORKAS: So, monitoring is a loaded  
9 term. As I mentioned, you know, we don't, in our  
10 Office of Intelligence and Analysis, what we don't do  
11 is go into an individual's equipment and monitor their  
12 social media activity, but rather we review publicly  
13 facing materials and we have the capacity and  
14 partnership to leverage others' work in the same vein,  
15 to get a very good picture of the threat landscape, and  
16 then to take that information, share it with our  
17 partners across the country so that the visibility is  
18 level set and our vigilance is level set as well.

19 MR. BARR: And you talk about sort of that  
20 issue and that needs resources. And so, much of DHS'  
21 focus has been preventing foreign terrorist attacks.  
22 But with domestic violent extremism, as we've talked

1 about at length emerging, do you think those resources  
2 are balanced?

3 MR. MAYORKAS: You know, I think that we are  
4 nimble to address the evolutions of threat that we have  
5 seen and that our country has experienced. I think  
6 that we can do that. One of the things that I am very  
7 focused on is building the infrastructure, building the  
8 architecture to be ready for the next evolution, the  
9 form of which we might not know, yet know.

10 So, one of the things, I'll give you an  
11 example, in studying the IT infrastructure in the  
12 Office of Intelligence and Analysis, I learned that we  
13 don't have the infrastructure to ably push out to  
14 state, local, tribal and territorial partners as  
15 rapidly as we should certain intelligence products on  
16 the high side.

17 And so, we're investing \$85 million to really  
18 build that infrastructure and have that capability to  
19 really disseminate information with the liquidity and  
20 urgency that the moment might meet or need I can say.  
21 That's an infrastructure change that I focused on  
22 building.

1           And from that lesson, we're looking across the  
2 department to see are we, you know, we're alert from a  
3 vigilance perspective. But do we have the  
4 infrastructure, do we have the operational capacity to  
5 meet what the future might bring? And that's something  
6 that we're really studying very carefully. And to  
7 build, we will seek other budget resources to build.

8           MR. BARR: Yeah, I do want to move to a  
9 different topic, which is the southern border. Of  
10 course, as we know, DHS' role on the border is quite  
11 vast. In July of 20 -- in July, excuse me, 210,000  
12 people crossed the border illegally. That is the most  
13 ever since 2000, as I'm sure you're aware. Some  
14 Republicans in Congress have the called the situation  
15 on the border a crisis. And based on that number, is  
16 it a crisis? And if not, what constitutes a border  
17 crisis?

18           MR. MAYORKAS: So, certainly, undue amount of  
19 attention has been paid, in my opinion, to words to  
20 focus on the situation. This is the way I look. Early  
21 this year we had a significant challenge, the number of  
22 unaccompanied children provided for a station

1 (inaudible) then what I felt then and I continue to  
2 feel, that our border control station is no place for a  
3 child.

4 I said at the time that we had a plan, that we  
5 were executing on a plan, the plan takes time to see  
6 through to fruition. And, indeed, in less than 60 days  
7 we addressed that situation. And just as we are  
8 addressing the situation of the number of encounters at  
9 the southern border on a daily, weekly and monthly  
10 basis, the number on average per day has dropped  
11 materially. We have employed a number of tools to  
12 achieve that outcome.

13 Once again, we have a plan. We're executing  
14 on it. And it doesn't really -- situation doesn't  
15 change with a flick of a switch. It requires  
16 tremendous amount of work. And I'm honored to be  
17 alongside those children.

18 MR. BARR: Yeah, and one of those tools in the  
19 toolbox was the getting rid of, for lack of a better  
20 word, the Remain in Mexico policy. But the Supreme  
21 Court had ruled in favor of keeping it based on some  
22 legal language. What is the status..

1           MR. MAYORKAS: They didn't quite issue that  
2 ruling, but they refused to impose a stay of the  
3 injunction that was issued. We do not -- we  
4 respectfully do not agree with district court's ruling  
5 and intent not to litigate. But there is a court order  
6 in place that requires us to implement Remain in  
7 Mexico. And we will abide by the court's order.

8           MR. BARR: Have you started to talk to Mexico  
9 about what that looks like?

10          MR. MAYORKAS: Yes, we have. We are obligated  
11 to do so.

12          MR. BARR: Okay. The President recently just  
13 announced a vaccine mandate for all federal workers.  
14 Many private employers have vaccine mandates. Do you  
15 think you'll mandate vaccines for those who cross the  
16 border illegally?

17          MR. MAYORKAS: I'm sorry, do I think the  
18 border...

19          MR. BARR: Do you think that you'll mandate a  
20 vaccination for those who cross the border illegally?

21          MR. MAYORKAS: I don't know. That's -- again,  
22 we take a look at the public health issues that

1 migration introduces, and we're taking steps to address  
2 it. And it's a dynamic situation. So, we have a  
3 policy of testing, isolating and quarantining  
4 individuals who we apprehend and who remain in our  
5 custody, for -- of whom we release on various  
6 conditions. And it evolves.

7           What we used to do, for example, with respect  
8 to unaccompanied children, is to test them upon arrival  
9 at the HHS facility. And now we have changed that to  
10 test them upon CBP intake by reason of the change in  
11 the public health landscape. So, we are -- we will  
12 evolve as the dynamism of the situation warrants from a  
13 public health perspective.

14           MR. BARR: And I did want to, before leaving  
15 the topic of the southern border, is DHS pursuing an  
16 alternative to the DACA while appealing the ruling that  
17 it was created unlawfully? What would that look like?  
18 And how could it be done differently?

19           MR. MAYORKAS: So, we reinstated --  
20 reinstated DACA. We are also promulgating a  
21 regulation. And I know that that is also (inaudible)  
22 is ongoing litigation. But one of the things that

1 we're -- we obviously are pursuing is regulatory  
2 implementation of DACA.

3 MR. BARR: Yeah. And before we leave the  
4 subject of immigration, this is so personal for you.  
5 You had talked about it at length. How do you look at  
6 these challenges from a, like 1,000-foot view?

7 MR. MAYORKAS: Challenge of immigration view  
8 or...

9 MR. BARR: Yes, yes.

10 MR. MAYORKAS: Well, I think different aspects  
11 of the challenge bring different thoughts to mind.  
12 Like, I am incredibly sad to see that everything about  
13 immigration falls in the epicenter of the tremendous  
14 divide that grips this country. I will say that,  
15 because I'm an undying optimist, I'm incredibly  
16 encouraged and hardened and uplifted by what I am  
17 seeing across our nation with respect to the Afghan  
18 nationalists who are arriving here.

19 The issue is certainly not met with unanimity,  
20 but it is met with, recently, this unprecedented unity  
21 on both sides of the aisle. Local, state officials  
22 have articulated with great pride and generosity of

1 spirit, their eagerness to receive Afghans into their  
2 communities and resettle them and integrate them  
3 successfully. I think this brings out the best of who  
4 we are as a country. And really reestablished our  
5 standing in the world as a place of refuge, something  
6 about which we historically have taken great pride.

7           You know, it's interesting. I shared this  
8 story last week. I visited Fort Lee, in Virginia. And  
9 the soldiers there spoke about their participation in  
10 Operation Allies Welcome as one of the greatest sources  
11 of pride in their military careers and in their lives.

12           And one of them recounted the fact that when  
13 the Afghan nationals arrive at Fort Lee and as they get  
14 off the bus, the soldiers provide the children with an  
15 American flag. And what the soldiers have seen is that  
16 the fathers of those children with their hands over  
17 their hearts in reverence and gratitude to what this  
18 country has done for them. It has evacuated them from  
19 danger into safety. And it has offered them a new  
20 home. It's breathtaking to see, it is breathtaking to  
21 see the children's paintings on the walls of one of the  
22 tents where they obtain the change of clothes, where

1 they obtain their counseling, where they obtain their  
2 halal meals, and you see the children's drawings of an  
3 American flag, of the Statue of Liberty. It's really  
4 inspiring. I have a lot of hope.

5 MR. BARR: And that keeps you going every day?

6 MR. MAYORKAS: There are lot of things that  
7 keep me going every day, that does, and the workforce  
8 keeps me going. Incredibly proud.

9 MR. BARR: Yeah. I do want to turn in the 7  
10 minutes we have left, before we open it up for question  
11 and answers, to cyber. We heard Chris Inglis before us  
12 talk about some of the threats the nation is facing.  
13 So, I wanted to put it to you. We've seen Russia and  
14 other state-backed actors target our critical  
15 infrastructure. What changes have you seen in the  
16 cyber activity from Russia and state-backed actors  
17 since the Presidents Summit with Vladimir Putin?

18 MR. MAYORKAS: Well, I think what we're  
19 waiting to see, and I have to tell you that I learned a  
20 lot about cyber security during my tenure as deputy  
21 secretary and of course in the years since then, and  
22 now. But I -- my level of knowledge is not approximate

1 (inaudible). But I think what we are waiting to see is  
2 nation states, Russia, and China, most notably, really  
3 take action with respect to cyber criminals operating  
4 within their geographic boundaries. That is something  
5 that we want to see, that we think they have the power  
6 to do and we do in respect of the International Court.

7 MR. BARR: And one of those issues that has  
8 arised was the Colonial Pipeline hack, as I'm sure  
9 you're well aware. And many were surprised. And for  
10 those who don't know, TSA is the lead agency for  
11 pipeline security. Do you think they have the  
12 appropriate resources to deal with such a critical  
13 infrastructure, keeping it safe?

14 MR. MAYORKAS: You know, we talked about this  
15 earlier, earlier today, and I have spoken about it with  
16 my colleagues and experts outside of the Department of  
17 Homeland Security. I do think that they are resourced  
18 but they also candidly have a terrific partnering  
19 system, Cyber Security and Infrastructure Security  
20 Agency within the department to partner. TSA responded  
21 to the Colonial Pipeline incident to security  
22 directives, that were promulgated in partnership and in

1 tandem with CISA, that brings us that unsurpassed cyber  
2 security expertise to bear.

3 MR. BARR: And more broadly, you talked just  
4 about CISA, but is the Department looking at changing  
5 the way critical infrastructure is protected?

6 MR. MAYORKAS: We are. We are taking a look.  
7 Under Chris' new leadership, thankfully, and the leader  
8 leadership of Anne Neuberger, the Deputy National  
9 Security Advisor for Cyber; as well as Jen Easterly and  
10 Bob Silvers (phonetic), Tim Warren (phonetic) or other  
11 -- Jen Dascell (phonetic) all our experts are taking a  
12 look at, you know, whether the critical infrastructure  
13 sectors are the right way to look at it or whether we  
14 should look at it more in a cross-functional way.  
15 That's one of the key questions that we have asked and  
16 that we are analyzing as we ensure all of government  
17 and all of America (inaudible). That's a very, very  
18 significant threat to the homeland to our nation's  
19 security (inaudible).

20 MR. BARR: And you talk about that significant  
21 threat, right, adversaries have attacked our power  
22 system, our food, our gas, our hospitals. So, what

1 exactly is that red line for nation states? What will  
2 be done if one of the nation states or nation-backed  
3 actors crosses them?

4 MR. MAYORKAS: I think that's a really  
5 terrific question, Luke, and it's something that's  
6 under quite a bit of study. I -- you know, I have my  
7 personal views. Critical infrastructure, you know, to  
8 attack that and imperil our way of life is a grave,  
9 grave act.

10 MR. BARR: Would you care to share any of  
11 those personal views, or?

12 MR. MAYORKAS: Let me give you an example. In  
13 the last few weeks, a hospital system that is resident  
14 in multiple states, small, small hospital system  
15 (inaudible). They lost the ability to provide acute  
16 medical care to their patients in a medical hospital.  
17 I find that -- well, I find that, you know, cyber  
18 attacks, to be unacceptable, but that to me is  
19 something that falls out for the development of  
20 international norms and consequences.

21 MR. BARR: Okay. We have just about 2 minutes  
22 left, so I did -- and then we'll open it up for

1 questions, both online and in-person here. But I did  
2 want to end on sort of a lighter note, because you  
3 talked to us last week and you were very proud that you  
4 were 7 months on the job.

5           And so, you were deputy secretary, as many  
6 people know, Jeh Johnson was secretary. Now that  
7 you're in the top job, is there anything that you feel  
8 like you understand as secretary that you didn't  
9 understand before? And is there anything about being  
10 in the top job that makes you go, oh, I get it now?

11           (Laughter)

12           MR. MAYORKAS: I'm not sure how to answer  
13 that. I think I had a good understanding, you know, of  
14 the weight that I bore as the deputy secretary, but the  
15 weight that Secretary Johnson bore even more so as the  
16 secretary. I think I understood it very well. And it  
17 was reflected in his unqualified devotion to the work  
18 and to this Department, you know, to the mission.  
19 Understanding it and living it are two different  
20 things. So, for example, I didn't expect sleep very  
21 much, and that's very different than actually not  
22 sleeping.

1 (Laughter)

2 MR. BARR: Fair enough. What's the biggest  
3 surprise? And it can't be the ghost at St.  
4 Elizabeth's. So, what's the biggest surprise?

5 MR. MAYORKAS: I don't think I was surprised.  
6 I think it's astonishing, which is a very different  
7 condition. I, you know, the -- one of the -- I think  
8 one of the greatest things about this particular  
9 position is that one has greater visibility into  
10 everything that's going on across the department,  
11 everyone has the opportunity to interact with that many  
12 more people in the department, and I'm just astonished  
13 at the dedication that is (inaudible) and the  
14 volunteerism, the level of sacrifice. I understood it  
15 as the deputy to this position, the vantage point is  
16 that much greater, and that's why it's that much more  
17 astonishing, but I could see and just the (inaudible).

18 MR. BARR: Fantastic. So, I've hogged up a  
19 lot of time as a TV producer, so I know a lot about  
20 that. But we have some time for questions in the  
21 audience and virtually, I'd like to open it up to the  
22 room now. Does anybody have a question for Secretary?

1 Go ahead, over there.

2 MR. MAYORKAS: I'm sorry I'm not there in  
3 person. And I can see who is going to pose the first  
4 softball question.

5 (Laughter)

6 MS. FELDMAN-PILTCH: I wish it was going to be  
7 a softball. I'm so sorry. My name is Maggie Feldman-  
8 Piltch. And, you know, we spent quite a bit of time  
9 talking about new arrivals to the United States from  
10 Afghanistan, and all the screening and vetting that  
11 they're going through, an alarming amount of screening  
12 and vetting maybe.

13 But a huge number of these Afghans have worked  
14 for or with United States for decades. And at a time  
15 where we're clearly, as you said, and as Dean and I  
16 said earlier this morning, lost a significant amount of  
17 visibility in Afghanistan in collecting intelligence  
18 and other information. Doesn't this seem like a great  
19 opportunity to maybe do something for the Afghans  
20 coming into the country and learn what we might be  
21 missing?

22 And I say this as someone who, along with some

1 friends, evacuated nearly 5,000 people and have spent  
2 the last month resettling them on our own dime, because  
3 the federal government is unable to provide support to  
4 people with humanitarian peril.

5 MR. MAYORKAS: -- if I'm not, so forgive me,  
6 you might need to keep the mic (inaudible). I'm not  
7 sure I understand the question in terms of what we can  
8 do to elicit information from them, that increases our  
9 visibility? What...

10 MS. FELDMAN-PILTCH: Sure, yes, I think  
11 particularly those that are coming from over a decade  
12 of working with DOD, a lot of them have incredibly  
13 relevant information and are eager to share it. And it  
14 seems like this would be a great opportunity to use  
15 that resource since we've lost visibility on the ground  
16 and perhaps build a more, I don't know, reliable  
17 relationship with someone that's here.

18 MR. MAYORKAS: I guess I would say, number  
19 one, we suppose that that is not being done. And I'm  
20 not sure I'm ready to make that, articulate that  
21 supposition, number one. And number two, just on the  
22 ability to deliver for these people, this is a pretty

1 unprecedented operation here, to evacuate tens of  
2 thousands, over 120,000 people in a short period of  
3 time from Afghanistan.

4 It is greater than the evacuation in 1975 by a  
5 multiple of approximately, if not more than 2.5. And  
6 we have received approximately 60,000 people in the  
7 United States. And we are working across the country  
8 from border to border, post to post to resell them,  
9 it's extraordinary.

10 MR. BARR: Anybody else have a question?  
11 Geneva? Sorry, Mr. Secretary, getting the mic.

12 MR. MAYORKAS: No problem.

13 MS. SANDS: Mr. Secretary, good evening.  
14 Geneva Sands with CNN. Also on the Afghanistan  
15 resettlement, we know that most people are being  
16 allowed into the U.S. on humanitarian parole. Are you  
17 going to need help from Congress to create a more  
18 permanent refugee status for the people that are  
19 entering the U.S. through this evacuation?

20 MR. MAYORKAS: So, I guess, and let me take a  
21 step back and explain, you know, share with everyone  
22 the population, its composition and then why that's a

1 yes. So, we have U.S. citizens, lawful permanent  
2 residents, special immigrant visa holders and their  
3 families. Then we have individuals who might not have  
4 any of those avenues to be admitted to the United  
5 States.

6 It can range from special immigrant visa  
7 applicants whose applications have not been processed  
8 to approval, who don't have their visas in hand, to  
9 locally employed staff and their families, to  
10 vulnerable Afghans, women activists, young women or  
11 others. And we are using the secretary discretionary  
12 authority to grant them humanitarian parole.

13 What that does is (inaudible) lawful presence  
14 upon them, and enable us to issue them, if they  
15 qualify, work authorization, but it doesn't provide  
16 lawful status. It doesn't provide a permanent enduring  
17 status here in the United States. And really, these  
18 individuals functionally are refugees, except in  
19 process only. We're hopeful that legislation will be  
20 passed so that there is a more permanent solution for  
21 their presence in the United States. Yes.

22 MR. BARR: And I think we have time for one

1 more, and all the way in the back.

2 MR. MIROFF: Hey, Mr. Secretary, it's Nick  
3 Miroff from *The Washington Post*. I've been --  
4 something I've been wanting to ask you for a while, and  
5 I'll just do it here in front of a few other people,  
6 which is to get you to reflect a little bit back about  
7 those early days when the administration rolled back so  
8 many of the previous administration's enforcement  
9 policies on the southern border.

10 I've seen this administration really consumed  
11 with the situation at the border, responding to it.  
12 And in some ways responding to the dynamics that were  
13 set in motion in that early phase. So, I just wanted  
14 to ask you, knowing that you weren't in the Secretary's  
15 seat in that initial period, it took a little while for  
16 you to get confirmed, do you think the administration  
17 moved too fast in those days to sequence those  
18 reversals?

19 And knowing that hindsight is 20/20, but  
20 giving you an opportunity to go back and do it again,  
21 what would you have done differently in that early  
22 phase?

1           MR. MAYORKAS: No, I mean that's a great  
2 question. I think what this administration has done is  
3 made indigenous (phonetic) that puts values  
4 (inaudible). And it is managing as, you know, capable  
5 of doing or managing through the consequences of the  
6 decisions that are predicated upon our administration's  
7 values.

8           And so, to give you an example, we made the  
9 decision that we would not employ the CDC's Title 42  
10 authority to expel unaccompanied children. Did that  
11 create potentially a greater number of unaccompanied  
12 children arriving in the United States? Many will say  
13 that empirically they believe that not to be the case.  
14 Did that create a challenge in March in our border  
15 patrol stations as I alluded to? It certainly did.

16           What did we do with our operational  
17 capabilities? We deployed FEMA personnel, 300  
18 personnel from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration  
19 Services. We developed an architecture to open up  
20 facilities in -- that HHS would want. We delivered  
21 adjudicative capabilities. So, the time that it took  
22 to identify sponsors and families for those children

1 who could receive them and provide them enduring  
2 shelter was accelerated. We did that in 60 days. Some  
3 say we moved too quickly, yes. Others will say we  
4 should never have had to move at all.

5           So, I think what we do is we make the  
6 decisions that our values and our thoughts dictate, our  
7 strategies dictate. And then if the consequences are  
8 predictable, we will plan for them. If we -- if the  
9 consequences surprise us, then we adapt, be nimble, and  
10 we develop operational plans to address them. And  
11 that's not to say that perfection is always achieved,  
12 but I will say this, that the integrity of the  
13 decision.

14           MR. MIROFF: Okay.

15           MR. BARR: Well, I think with that, Mr.  
16 Secretary, that's all the time we have. Thank you so  
17 much for the session today. It was great. And have a  
18 wonderful night. Thank you.

19           (Applause)

20           UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right, thank you,  
21 Luke. Thank you Secretary Mayorkas. So, that ends the  
22 evening's plenary sessions. Again, thank you all for

1 coming and arriving.

2           We are now welcoming everyone out to the  
3 Culinary Garden, out the back doors here, for a welcome  
4 reception hosted by our silver partner, Securonix. And  
5 then there's the invitation-only dinner followed after  
6 that. So, please come outside. Enjoy the warm weather  
7 and some more socialization.

8                           \*   \*   \*   \*   \*