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Before the

Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities

COMMITTEE ON  
ARMED SERVICES

## **UNITED STATES SENATE**

HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE REVIEW OF  
VETTING POLICIES FOR INTERNATIONAL MILITARY  
STUDENTS FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON NAVAL AIR  
STATION PENSACOLA

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

Washington, D.C.

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1 HEARING TO RECEIVE TESTIMONY ON  
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4 FOLLOWING THE ATTACK ON NAVAL AIR STATION PENSACOLA

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8 U.S. Senate  
9 Subcommittee on Emerging  
10 Threats and Capabilities  
11 Committee on Armed Services  
12 Washington, D.C.

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14 The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:04 a.m.  
15 in Room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Joni  
16 Ernst, chairman of the subcommittee, presiding.

17 Subcommittee Members Present: Senators Ernst, Scott,  
18 Hawley, and Peters.

1           OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JONI ERNST, U.S. SENATOR  
2 FROM IOWA

3           Senator Ernst: Good morning, everyone. We will call  
4 this Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and Capabilities to  
5 order.

6           And the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats and  
7 Capabilities meets today to receive testimony on the  
8 Department of Defense review of the December 6th, 2019  
9 insider attack on Naval Air Station Pensacola in which three  
10 U.S. service members tragically lost their lives and eight  
11 more suffered injuries. It is critical that we learn from  
12 the attack, understand the threat, and take the necessary  
13 steps to ensure the protection of our service men and women  
14 going forward.

15           I would like to welcome our witnesses: Mr. Garry Reid,  
16 who serves as the Director for Defense Intelligence in the  
17 Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence;  
18 and Lieutenant General Charles Hooper, who serves as the  
19 Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency. And  
20 thank you both very much for being with us today, and we  
21 look forward to your testimonies.

22           The National Defense Strategy focuses on strengthening  
23 alliances and attracting new partners as a key component to  
24 more effectively compete with China and Russia while  
25 countering the continued threat posed by radical terrorist

1 groups and rogue regimes. The NDS states that by working  
2 together with allies and partners, we amass the greatest  
3 possible strength for the long-term advancement of our  
4 interests, maintaining favorable balances of power that  
5 deter aggression and support the stability that generates  
6 growth. I agree with the NDS.

7 That is why I have long supported critical security  
8 cooperation programs such as the International Military  
9 Training and Education, or IMET. These programs provide our  
10 partners from around the world an opportunity to train and  
11 learn from the best here in the United States. Ultimately,  
12 our partners return to their home countries with a greater  
13 appreciation of the U.S. and impart lessons learned on how  
14 to better organize and employ their own armed forces. These  
15 programs improve our interoperability with key partners and  
16 lay the foundation for enduring cooperation that will pay  
17 dividends for years to come.

18 Over the past 20 years, more than 1 million  
19 international military students have trained in the United  
20 States. Currently the United States hosts over 5,000  
21 students from 153 countries. Many of the students who come  
22 to the U.S. are the same troops who have fought or will  
23 fight alongside Americans down range. Oftentimes they rise  
24 through the ranks and become leaders in their own armed  
25 forces, with many becoming chiefs of defense, ministers, or

1 even presidents.

2           However, while the benefits of these programs are  
3 invaluable, the tragic events at Pensacola highlight  
4 unacceptable shortfalls in our security standards and  
5 vetting procedures. The attacker, Saeed Alshamrani, arrived  
6 in the United States in 2017 and harbored anti-U.S.  
7 sentiments which he broadcasted on social media, all the  
8 while he was able to purchase a firearm, access U.S.  
9 military installations, and ultimately carry out a deadly  
10 attack against Americans. We must do more to protect our  
11 military personnel and ensure the security of our  
12 facilities.

13           Mr. Reid and General Hooper, we look forward to your  
14 testimonies explaining the results of the Department of  
15 Defense review and describing what corrective steps are  
16 being undertaken. Your findings are critical to our efforts  
17 to ensure the Department has the resources, the support, and  
18 authorities it needs. And thank you again for joining us.  
19 I look forward to the discussion.

20           Before I hand it over to Senator Peters for his opening  
21 remarks, I would like to remind everyone that later we will  
22 close the hearing in order to discuss sensitive matters of  
23 national security. At that point, we will ask for the  
24 public and members of the press to exit the room. We  
25 appreciate your cooperation and understanding. The intent

1 is for us to break at 10:30, and we will then at that time  
2 clear the room. Senator Peters and I will go vote. We do  
3 have a vote called for 10:30, and then we will reassemble  
4 those that have the authority to stay in the room. We will  
5 reassemble. So thank you very much.

6 Ranking Member Peters?

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1           STATEMENT OF HON. GARY C. PETERS, U.S. SENATOR FROM  
2 MICHIGAN

3           Senator Peters: Let me begin by thanking Senator Ernst  
4 for holding this hearing on changes made by the Department  
5 of Defense in response to the December 6th, 2019 attack at  
6 Naval Station Pensacola that unfortunately and tragically  
7 resulted in the death of three U.S. service members and  
8 wounding of eight other Americans. Our thoughts remain with  
9 the victims and their families.

10          We have a responsibility to the victims to learn all  
11 that we can from the attack and to implement changes that  
12 will mitigate the risk of future occurrences to the greatest  
13 extent possible.

14          Following the attack, the Department reacted quickly to  
15 put in place additional safety measures.

16          The provision of training to foreign military personnel  
17 is a comparative advantage of the United States over our  
18 near-peer competitors like China and Russia. Such training  
19 not only helps to improve interoperability with foreign  
20 partners, but also to establish connections with junior  
21 officers that then go on to hold significant leadership  
22 positions in their home countries in the future.

23          Indeed, the International Military Education and  
24 Training, or IMET, program is regularly cited by our  
25 military and diplomatic leadership as the most effective and

1 resource-efficient tool that we have to build strong  
2 military-to-military relationships with foreign partners.

3 Despite these clear benefits, we must ensure that such  
4 training does not risk the safety of U.S. military  
5 personnel, other foreign students, or the installations in  
6 which the training is occurring.

7 On January 17th, the Department announced new safety  
8 measures, and I am looking forward to hearing about those  
9 new safety measures from the witnesses today.

10 I want to thank the chair once again for holding this  
11 hearing, and I look forward to the discussion.

12 Senator Ernst: Thank you.

13 So we will go ahead with our witnesses' opening  
14 statements, and we will start with you, Mr. Reid.

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1           STATEMENT OF GARRY REID, DIRECTOR FOR DEFENSE  
2   INTELLIGENCE, COUNTERINTELLIGENCE, LAW ENFORCEMENT, AND  
3   SECURITY, OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE FOR  
4   INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY

5           Mr. Reid: Thank you, Chairman Ernst and Ranking Member  
6   Peters, Senator Scott, other members that may be joining us.  
7   We appreciate the opportunity to testify today and address  
8   your questions regarding our review of international  
9   military student screening and vetting procedures.

10          The tragic loss of life that occurred at Pensacola  
11   Naval Air Station on December 6th, 2019 will never fade from  
12   our memories. Three young and vibrant U.S. Navy sailors,  
13   Ensign Kaleb Watson, Airman Cameron Walters, and Airman Mo  
14   Haitham, were tragically taken from us, their families, and  
15   their loved ones, paying the ultimate sacrifice to save  
16   others by heroically confronting their attacker. Three of  
17   the eight wounded were first responders from the Naval  
18   Security Forces and the Escambia County Sheriff's Office.  
19   Their brave actions to get control of the situation within  
20   15 minutes of the initial gunfire saved many more from the  
21   heavily armed shooter. We are forever indebted to our  
22   fallen comrades and those that took swift action to protect  
23   others from what was later determined by the U.S. Department  
24   of Justice as an act of terrorism.

25          We greatly appreciate the outstanding work of our

1 federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies. It was  
2 the great partnership between Naval Security Forces  
3 Pensacola and the Escambia County Sheriff's Office that  
4 enabled such a swift and effective response to this attack,  
5 saving countless lives.

6 In response to the attack, the Department of Defense  
7 immediately implemented a safety and security stand-down.  
8 The Secretary of Defense directed my office to take  
9 immediate steps in two areas: one, to strengthen the  
10 vetting process for international military students  
11 immediately; and two, to conduct a comprehensive review of  
12 the policies and procedures in place for screening foreign  
13 students and granting them access to our bases. I am here  
14 today to brief you on the results of this work and, as you  
15 already mentioned, Madam Chair, to follow up in a closed  
16 session to talk about some of the national security details.

17 With regard to first task, we screened all current  
18 Saudi Arabian military students immediately using new  
19 procedures that we had recently put in place as part of our  
20 personnel vetting transformation initiative which, as you  
21 have been previously briefed, we are building towards a  
22 continuous vetting process that relies on automated data  
23 record searches as a supplement to the investigative  
24 process. We put this process into place for the  
25 international military students, and it stays in place

1 today. We screened all of the Saudi students, and we are  
2 continuing to work through the full population of roughly  
3 5,000 current IMS.

4 These automated searches look at intelligence  
5 community-derived data sets that include government data,  
6 commercial data, and publicly available data. The results  
7 of these checks are analyzed by trained security experts and  
8 analysts and used as a basis for determination if further  
9 investigative action could be required.

10 In this case, the review produced only a small number  
11 of returns that required additional analysis within the  
12 Department of Defense, but none that triggered any remedial  
13 action or further investigation by federal authorities  
14 relative to the current population. It should be noted,  
15 however, that the perpetrator of the attack and several of  
16 those associated with the perpetrator were not subjected to  
17 this review because they were already subjects to the  
18 ongoing FBI investigation and they were examined more  
19 thoroughly through that process. And as you may have been  
20 briefed, that resulted ultimately in the removal of 21 Saudi  
21 Arabian military officers from training in the U.S. for  
22 misconduct, however, not related to the December 6th attack.

23 Moving on to the policy review, we found that the  
24 Department of Defense has been overly reliant on the vetting  
25 conducted by the Department of State as part of their

1 assessment of eligibility for the visa and that there is  
2 insufficient information sharing in place between DOD and  
3 the Department of State in that process.

4 We also found that DOD programs meant to detect and  
5 mitigate events such as the Pensacola attack did not cover  
6 international military students, for instance, our insider  
7 threat programs. We learned that policies for international  
8 military student possession of firearms varied at the  
9 installation level and that at the federal level, there are  
10 ways to bypass firearms restrictions for non-immigrant visa  
11 holders.

12 We are well underway to implement the six  
13 recommendations derived from 21 findings contained in the  
14 report. Additional screening and vetting measures are  
15 already in effect for all current and future international  
16 military students. The Secretary has issued new policies  
17 related to access credentials and the possession of  
18 privately owned firearms and ammunition for our  
19 international military students. We will build on this with  
20 additional changes that reach across the entire student  
21 populations and foreign affiliate landscape within the  
22 Department of Defense.

23 To implement these recommendations, I have established  
24 a vetting and security review improvement integration group,  
25 co-chaired with General Hooper's office and the Defense

1 Security Cooperation Agency. We have four subordinate  
2 working groups going through each of these recommendations  
3 and findings in detail to implement the full set of  
4 proposals and ideas. We will be happy to provide you these  
5 details in the closed session.

6 In closing, it is important to note that this work is  
7 not singularly focused on the tragic events that occurred at  
8 Pensacola. Protecting our personnel and our military bases  
9 is a top priority for Secretary Esper. Across the  
10 Department, we are actively reinforcing our insider threat  
11 programs, improving base security, and strengthening our  
12 counterintelligence posture. Within the Federal Government,  
13 we are in the midst of the most significant reform of the  
14 background investigation process in decades, adopting new  
15 technologies and improving our awareness of personnel  
16 security threats.

17 We appreciate all the congressional support we have  
18 received over the past several years to provide us the  
19 resources and authorities for the full range of DOD  
20 security, counterintelligence, law enforcement, and insider  
21 threat programs. It is this ongoing work that enabled us to  
22 quickly adapt the international military student vetting  
23 process. We will continue to modernize this enterprise for  
24 all trusted personnel that live, work, and do business on  
25 Department of Defense installations around the world.

1 Thank you again for your interest in these matters, and  
2 I look forward to your questions.

3 [The prepared statement of Mr. Reid follows:]

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1 Senator Ernst: Great. Thank you very much, Mr. Reid.  
2 General Hooper, thank you.

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1           STATEMENT OF LIEUTENANT GENERAL CHARLES W. HOOPER,  
2           USA, DIRECTOR, DEFENSE SECURITY COOPERATION AGENCY

3           General Hooper: Thank you, Madam Chairwoman, Ranking  
4           Member Peters, for convening this hearing today. And I  
5           acknowledge the presence of Senator Scott, ladies, and  
6           gentlemen.

7           The training and education of foreign military  
8           personnel in the United States is one of our most effective  
9           tools to strengthen alliances and attract new partners. As  
10          a foreign area officer and a career security cooperator, I  
11          have worked alongside many foreign military leaders whose  
12          training in the United States established an appreciation  
13          for American culture and values and has shaped longstanding  
14          cooperation and partnership with the United States.

15          While the value of these types of military training and  
16          education programs cannot be overstated, I want to be  
17          absolutely clear that nothing is more important than  
18          safeguarding American lives. The incident in Pensacola was  
19          tragic, and my heart remains with the families of those we  
20          lost and with the people of Pensacola for the impact this  
21          event has had on their community.

22          My colleague and I today will be sharing new procedures  
23          the U.S. Government has put into place to reduce risk and  
24          improve the training environment so that all U.S. foreign  
25          military civilian personnel and their families remain safe

1 and have the opportunity to continue benefiting from our  
2 foreign military training programs.

3       The training and education of foreign military  
4 personnel alongside U.S. forces and specifically in the  
5 United States is one of our most effective security  
6 cooperation tools. What makes the U.S. approach to security  
7 cooperation different from that of our strategic competitors  
8 is that the basis of our approach is not the sale of goods  
9 and services but the enduring relationship that comes along  
10 with it. At the heart of any defense relationship is a  
11 human relationship that is built and fostered through  
12 opportunities for U.S. and foreign military students to  
13 train alongside one another. When international military  
14 students attend training and education in the United States,  
15 they are exposed to our values, our culture, and our people.  
16 These experiences serve as the building blocks for our long-  
17 term strategic and defense relationships.

18       In addition to building lasting relationships, these  
19 training programs build the capacity of our allies and  
20 partners to provide for their own defense and contribute to  
21 shared security challenges. Education and training in the  
22 United States is foundational to building an enduring  
23 interoperability with our partners and allies.

24       Since the year 2000, over 1 million international  
25 military students have been trained in the United States.

1 We have trained more than 28,000 Saudi students over the  
2 life of our security cooperation relationship. It is worth  
3 noting that close to 4,000 heads of state, ministers of  
4 defense, chiefs of defense, and other general officers  
5 received training by the United States. This delivers a  
6 lasting strategic return on our security cooperation  
7 investments.

8       Recently, our own Secretary of Defense discussed his  
9 personal experience training alongside foreign partners. He  
10 attended West Point with students from other countries,  
11 trained at the Hellenic Military Academy, and trained  
12 alongside an officer from the African continent while he was  
13 on active duty. These experiences have shaped his strong  
14 support for foreign military training and education programs  
15 and informed the Department's response to the incident in  
16 Pensacola.

17       International military students can receive training  
18 and education in the United States under a variety of  
19 programs. The Department of Defense and the Department of  
20 State both have authorities and appropriations to fund  
21 military training in the United States. Most of this  
22 training occurs at Department of Defense facilities and  
23 schools.

24       The Department of Defense provides and funds  
25 international military training and education under a

1 variety of DOD programs such as section 333 Global Train and  
2 Equip, the Counter-ISIL Train and Equip Fund, the Afghan  
3 Security Forces Fund, the Regional Centers for Security  
4 Studies, and the Regional Defense Combating Terrorism and  
5 Irregular Warfare Fellowship Program, which we now refer to  
6 as the Regional Defense Fellowship Program.

7 The Department of State has three main programs to fund  
8 U.S. training of foreign militaries for which the Department  
9 of Defense is the main implementer: the International  
10 Military Education and Training, or IMET, program; Foreign  
11 Military Financing; and the Peacekeeping Operations account,  
12 which includes the Global Peace Operations Initiative.

13 Department of State funding, via the IMET program, is  
14 focused on the professionalization of partner nation  
15 military forces. My emphasizing professional military  
16 education at every level of an individual's career, we seek  
17 to develop professional leaders with whom the United States  
18 can work and foster enduring relationships that enable  
19 collaboration over time.

20 The Department of State uses Foreign Military Financing  
21 to fund training, which typically focuses on tactical or  
22 operational subjects and is directly related to a  
23 procurement made through other programs.

24 In addition, State funds training through the  
25 Peacekeeping Operations account, which is almost exclusively

1 conducted in partner nations and is primarily for  
2 peacekeeping, counterterrorism, maritime security, and  
3 military professionalization purposes in select countries.

4 The programs I have discussed thus far are programs  
5 that rely primarily on U.S. grant assistance. However, many  
6 of our allies and partners use their own money to come to  
7 the United States for DOD-provided training associated with  
8 procurements of defense articles and services under Foreign  
9 Military Sales. DSCA is responsible for ensuring transfers  
10 of defense articles and services, to include the necessary  
11 training and education to ensure the effective operation and  
12 sustainment of these systems.

13 DSCA's role in supporting foreign military training  
14 executed pursuant to these authorities is to implement and  
15 administer these programs by providing policy guidance and  
16 support to the U.S. Government stakeholders who are part of  
17 the enterprise. These stakeholders include the geographical  
18 combatant commands and the security cooperation offices at  
19 embassies, the State Department's Political Military Affairs  
20 Bureau, and the military departments whose schoolhouses run  
21 a majority of the training and education programs. DSCA's  
22 support ranges from annual security cooperation planning  
23 conferences to issuing and maintaining DOD-wide guidance for  
24 the execution of its security assistance and security  
25 cooperation programs.

1           For example, while DSCA is not directly involved in the  
2 screening or vetting of international military students, the  
3 agency issues policies and procedural guidance that requires  
4 international military students to receive security and  
5 medical screening in their home countries. However, due to  
6 this unique individual nature of our bilateral  
7 relationships, each U.S. ambassador determines the local  
8 security screening processes for their individual posts.  
9 Meanwhile, any student who comes to the United States under  
10 one of these programs is also screened and vetted to  
11 determine their eligibility for a U.S. visa. The visa  
12 application process includes screening against biographic  
13 and biometric databases, an interagency counterterrorism  
14 check, and at 37 posts worldwide, including those in Saudi  
15 Arabia, screening by an Immigration and Customs  
16 Enforcement/Homeland Security Investigations Visa Security  
17 Unit.

18           DSCA, the Department of State, and the Offices of the  
19 Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence and Policy, the  
20 military departments, and our foreign partners are all  
21 critical to ensuring the success of our foreign military  
22 training programs, and we have been working hand in hand to  
23 update processes and policy guidance in response to the  
24 events in Pensacola.

25           In closing, I want to reiterate how invaluable foreign

1 military training programs are to advancing our national  
2 security objectives. International military students are  
3 here as student visitors to learn skills and professions but  
4 also to learn about our people, our culture, and our values.  
5 And this cannot be overstated. The human relationships  
6 forged between our respective military members promote long-  
7 term defense and strategic relationships, increase our  
8 interoperability, and enable partners to contribute to our  
9 shared security objectives over the long term.

10 Thank you very much.

11 [The prepared statement of General Hooper follows:]

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1           Senator Ernst: Thank you very much.

2           We will go ahead and start with our rounds of  
3 questions, and we will get as many questions in as we can  
4 prior to breaking for the vote. So I will go ahead and  
5 start with a couple of questions about acquisition of  
6 weapons in the United States.

7           And Mr. Reid and General Hooper, thanks again for being  
8 here today to testify. This is an important topic.

9           I would like to begin by talking about the ability of  
10 foreign international military students to acquire weapons  
11 in the United States. According to the FBI, the Pensacola  
12 shooter used a hunting license to legally purchase a 9  
13 millimeter Glock 45 pistol. Mr. Reid, can you discuss the  
14 ways in which foreign nationals, foreign students can obtain  
15 a weapon either on or off a military base?

16           Mr. Reid: Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair.

17           So as we mentioned, we had variances in our policies  
18 that did not specifically proscribe international military  
19 students from obtaining, purchasing, and handling firearms  
20 while they were enrolled in the training. And Secretary  
21 Esper has issued new guidance that makes that a clear  
22 prohibition and is a condition of them accepting the  
23 opportunity to train in the United States going forward that  
24 they will sign this acknowledgement statement that they are  
25 no longer -- regardless of any State, local, and federal

1 laws, that they are proscribed by the Secretary as a sponsor  
2 of that training. So we have put that in place.

3 With regard to the shooter in Pensacola, as you  
4 noted -- and you have likely seen the same things I have  
5 seen coming out of the FBI and ATF where in most States in  
6 this country, if you have a valid hunting license, there is  
7 no further requirement for any documentation, which seems to  
8 go against other statutes that proscribe non-immigrant visa  
9 holders from doing that. I am not an expert on either one  
10 of these areas, but we understand that to be the case.

11 We are working with ATF right now. I believe from our  
12 department, we intend to put forward changes to legislation  
13 to close down what looks like a loophole there. I  
14 understand that ATF is looking at it very similarly.

15 All of this, of course, we are talking about the legal  
16 purchase, but if you know a little bit about the firearms in  
17 general, purchasing from an individual is different from a  
18 firearms dealer, and many of these restrictions that we just  
19 talked about -- they vary when it is just individual-to-  
20 individual sales. And then that does not even get into the  
21 non-legal acquisition of firearms. So there are clearly  
22 many ways in this country to obtain a firearm.

23 What we have taken action on from the Secretary is to  
24 make it very clear to all of our military partners that any  
25 use of firearms while they are here in training -- first of

1 all, they are proscribed from the purchasing, as we  
2 mentioned. We acknowledge, however, that there are many  
3 traditions on many of our bases for skeet shooting and other  
4 firearms-related sport activities. The Secretary has  
5 granted the installation commanders the discretion to  
6 approve those actions, should they comport with and be  
7 consistent with the training environment and should there be  
8 no other reason for the commander to disapprove that. We  
9 put that down in their hands to do that different from the  
10 acquisition of the weapon that we already talked about.

11 So we have not completely prohibited any of them from  
12 ever handling a firearm. We have received concerns from  
13 many members and partner nations about some of these sport  
14 activities, and we are open-minded about how those  
15 possibilities may work in the future, but they will be at  
16 the discretion of the local commander and with that  
17 awareness on a limited specifically approved basis.

18 Senator Ernst: Yes. Certainly I do not believe that  
19 through school activities or those sporting activities, most  
20 of the training may require different weapons to be handled,  
21 but certainly that would be different than the acquisition  
22 of a weapon.

23 My time is expiring. I would like to move on to  
24 Ranking Member Peters for questions, and then we will go on  
25 to the other members of the subcommittee.

1 Senator Peters: Thank you, Madam Chair.

2 Mr. Reid, I just want to kind of drill down a little  
3 bit more on your answer on dealing with firearms as to how  
4 that is actually going to be enforced. Now, you do testify  
5 that it is very easy to get a firearm in the United States  
6 right now. And even when you have this prohibition, how are  
7 you going to be working with State and local authorities to  
8 actually enforce it was my first question.

9 The second part is that even legal purchases -- you  
10 mentioned the person-to-person, but under our background  
11 check laws, I think roughly 40 percent of weapons are sold  
12 without any kind of background check if you do it online or  
13 if you go to gun shows. So how are you going to deal with  
14 those challenges?

15 Mr. Reid: Thank you, Senator Peters.

16 So we are coming at it from a couple of angles, again  
17 working with ATF and working within the enterprise that  
18 forms the National Instant Crime Check System, there are  
19 pathways for us to create alerting functions within there  
20 for certain populations. We are exploring that with ATF.  
21 But as you already mentioned, it is not going to stop  
22 everything.

23 Within our own department, we have put in place  
24 additional programs and procedures going down at the  
25 installation level with our insider threat programs,

1 training and educating the full student population on things  
2 that would be indicators of nefarious or undesirable  
3 behaviors, including such as off-book firearms activities.  
4 So we put some filters in place so our entire student body  
5 in our cadre are more attuned to recognizing where there may  
6 be indicators of this behavior.

7 We are also -- General Hooper is probably better to  
8 describe -- putting in additional measures with the host  
9 nation governments, particularly the Saudi Government, on  
10 training controls and supervision of the training population  
11 that will give us an additional layer of observation. So we  
12 are tackling it in that way and through the technical side  
13 working within the legal framework.

14 Senator Peters: Let me pick up on that. Has Saudi  
15 Arabia made any commitments with respect to vetting their  
16 personnel before they actually are sent to the United  
17 States? If I heard your testimony correct, this individual  
18 was posting things on social media prior to coming to the  
19 United States. Is that accurate?

20 Mr. Reid: I will go to the first part, and Senator  
21 Ernst mentioned it I believe. Through the investigation,  
22 the FBI uncovered that the attacker had posted in the months  
23 -- a few month time period preceding the attack some  
24 jihadist type rhetoric. I am not aware of any posting by  
25 this person before they came here.

1 Do you want to address the government?

2 General Hooper: Sir, as to the first part of your  
3 question, the answer to your question is yes. The Saudis  
4 have agreed to do a number of things differently, and they  
5 have been very willing to work with the United States on  
6 improving their own internal vetting processes. This  
7 includes increased psychological and behavioral testing  
8 prior to nomination to uncover potential ideological,  
9 social, or family issues or anxieties. They are also  
10 providing their nominations to us ahead of time with greater  
11 lead time to allow our own U.S. vetting sufficient time to  
12 operate.

13 Finally, we will be asking the Saudis to consider the  
14 individual's personal opinions or attitudes towards the U.S.  
15 Government, U.S. officials, U.S. policies, and Western  
16 culture and respect for persons of different race, gender,  
17 religion, national origin, or sexual orientation when  
18 screening them for training in the United States.

19 Senator Peters: You mentioned that right now the focus  
20 is screening all current Saudi personnel in the United  
21 States and that eventually it will go to the entire  
22 population. How are you prioritizing that?

23 Mr. Reid: Senator, we are about two-thirds of the way  
24 through the 5,000, roughly, population currently in the  
25 country. We are prioritizing on the basis of our terrorism

1 high threat categorization that comes out of the Director  
2 for National Intelligence of our high threat terrorism  
3 locations, correlating that with the student populations,  
4 and working that as a priority scheme.

5 Senator Peters: And then you will engage in continuous  
6 monitoring. Walk me through how you plan to continuously  
7 monitor these 5,000 individuals.

8 Mr. Reid: From the technical point of view, the  
9 database search functions that I have already described --  
10 we have the ability to query and to set alerts within those  
11 data sets, much like we do for our own continuous vetting  
12 population for our national security populations.

13 We are additionally pursuing and working through a  
14 pilot right now on a social media monitoring and alerting  
15 function through commercial vendors. We have had a lot of  
16 people offer that to us, and I will tell you, frankly, when  
17 we put it to the test and tried to do it on scale, you are  
18 sometimes dissatisfied with the fidelity of the results.  
19 And of course, anytime we are talking about social media,  
20 you have a host of issues about identity resolution and  
21 matching that to a person and the credibility of the  
22 information. But we are pursuing that at the direction of  
23 the Secretary to be more proactively monitoring on the  
24 social media front.

25 Some of the databases we are already monitoring derive

1 from some social media sources, but it is not comprehensive.  
2 So we are pursuing that.

3 And then the third means of monitoring is a non-  
4 technical means that I already described, Senator, which  
5 would be through our insider threat awareness programs that  
6 exist at the installation.

7 Senator Peters: Thank you.

8 Senator Ernst: Senator Scott?

9 Senator Scott: Thank you, Senator Ernst, for holding  
10 this hearing.

11 And thank each of you for being here.

12 So this happened in my home State. One thing that has  
13 surprised me is why do people not call this terrorism. It  
14 is like nobody wants to use the word "terrorism," and  
15 clearly, this was somebody that post jihadist information  
16 and clearly was anti-America. But people want to talk about  
17 this being an incident or something like that. I do not  
18 know how anybody could think it was not terrorism. Why is  
19 there a reluctance to call this terrorism?

20 Mr. Reid: I will speak for myself, Senator, but also  
21 for the Department. We fully recognize the conclusions of  
22 the Attorney General that this was an act of terrorism. I  
23 know within the Department of the Navy and the honors and  
24 recognitions they bestowed upon the three fallen sailors  
25 recognize that they fell at the hands of a terrorist attack.

1 I have not experienced any pushback on our side, and if I  
2 referred to it differently, it was in no way to downplay the  
3 fact that it was -- I spent 28 years in special operations  
4 fighting terrorism. So I am very sensitive to that. Thank  
5 you.

6 Senator Scott: General, does the Department feel like  
7 if you call it terrorism, it hurts what we are trying to do?

8 General Hooper: Sir, I concur with my colleague that  
9 it has been unequivocally identified as an act of terrorism.

10 Senator Scott: So what everybody talks about is how  
11 having the training here helps build long-term relationships  
12 and all that. And it sounds really good. My concern,  
13 though, is when you talk to people that have been part of  
14 this -- there are a lot of countries that participate -- and  
15 they will say that there are countries where, yes, we have  
16 long-term relationships after the fact because we train  
17 together. But I have not to date found one person that has  
18 said they had a long-term relationship with Saudi nationals  
19 that they trained with. And I think all of us know the  
20 importance of our relationship with Saudi Arabia. It is an  
21 ally. It is clearly somebody that we rely on to work with  
22 in the Middle East.

23 Should we look at countries differently? Because if  
24 you listen to your testimony, especially yours, General, you  
25 talk a lot about the importance of this relationship. And I

1 hear that, but I never hear that about Saudi Arabia. So are  
2 there countries that we ought to say that maybe we should  
3 not be doing this or there is something different that we  
4 ought to be doing, we should do more of it in their home  
5 country, things like that?

6 General Hooper: Sir, in answer to your question, the  
7 defense attache from Saudi Arabia and I have had multiple  
8 discussions about this perception of Saudi students in  
9 Pensacola and at other training installations. He has  
10 expressed his concern over this, and he has come to us with  
11 solutions on how the Saudis intend to address this. And  
12 then I will discuss how we intend to address this issue.

13 Among the steps that the Saudis have committed to are  
14 increased cultural awareness training before their students  
15 begin training in the United States, to increase their  
16 security, religious, ideological awareness, and U.S.  
17 personnel will deliver part of this training.

18 Second, we will be distributing a code of conduct, and  
19 they will be distributing a code of conduct detailing what  
20 the kingdom leadership expects of their students while in  
21 the United States.

22 Third, there will be increased supervision of Saudi  
23 students by both local liaison officers and more personal  
24 engagement and oversight by the Saudi defense attache who,  
25 as you know, is the senior Saudi defense official in the

1 United States. We are working with the Saudis to ensure  
2 that their liaison officers are sufficiently senior in rank  
3 to ensure their effectiveness and authority in this role,  
4 and I can tell you personally that, in consultation with  
5 Navy, I have conveyed to the Saudi leadership that we will  
6 not accept anything less than a colonel at Pensacola, a  
7 Saudi colonel to be the liaison officer at Pensacola.

8 In addition, the Department of Defense, in  
9 collaboration with the Department of State, has reviewed  
10 existing standards of conduct for international military  
11 students and is transmitting to Saudi Arabia a conduct  
12 expectations document to further inform their vetting.

13 Beyond just these dos and don'ts, this explanation of  
14 the Department of Defense expectations emphasizes the  
15 importance of attitudes, to your point, sir, towards the  
16 United States and respect for persons of all backgrounds.

17 In addition, the Department is reviewing our  
18 international military student sponsorship program to  
19 determine how to increase Saudi participation. These  
20 programs will further promote cultural awareness and  
21 strengthen relationships among Saudi, U.S., and other  
22 international military students.

23 So these are unique steps that we are taking with  
24 respect to this perception that you have articulated about  
25 Saudi students.

1           Senator Scott: I know my time is up. We will have  
2 other time later.

3           Senator Ernst: Yes. We will have additional time.

4           The vote has been called. So this will be a natural  
5 breaking point. So we will go ahead and transition.

6           Senator Scott and I will go vote, and Senator Peters has  
7 already moved that direction. So we will reconvene as soon  
8 as I return, and we will start on the closed portion of the  
9 hearing. Thank you.

10           [Whereupon, at 10:42 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

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