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A CHAT WITH THE SECRETARY

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A CHAT WITH THE SECRETARY

(6:00 p.m.)

MR. ERVIN: Good evening, everybody. We're going to get started. Well, good evening, everyone. I am Clark Ervin, the executive director of the Aspen Institute's Homeland Security program. And it's my great pleasure to welcome all of you to the seventh annual Aspen Security Forum. As we gather here in Aspen tonight, the threat picture facing national security policymakers has never seemed more complicated. It seems that we are finally in that new normal that policymakers feared after 9/11, a time when terror attacks are both regular and random not only abroad, but here at home as well.

Meanwhile they must deal with increasingly urgent traditional national security threats from nation states. Threats like Russia's cold war-like challenges to NATO, China's push for military supremacy in the South China Sea, and North Korea's determination to develop nuclear weapons that can strike the United States, to name only a few. Over the course of the next 3 days we will explore these national security challenges in more and great detail. You can follow the conversation on social media with hashtag Aspen Security Forum. And please visit our website for think pieces from our featured speakers and moderators.

I want to express our profound thanks to our 2016 corporate sponsors IBM, Intel Security, iSIGHT Partners, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Target. And we're also grateful to the cosponsors of tonight's session, Tom and Bonnie McCloskey, whose charitable foundation generously underwrites the McCloskey Speaker Series, of which tonight's session is a part. So with that let me turn to Jackie Rice, executive vice president, chief risk and compliance officer for Target who will formally introduce tonight's session. Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MS. RICE: Good evening, everyone. On behalf of Target we have several of my colleagues here with us tonight. A sincere thanks to Clark, to Walter, and to the entire Aspen team. This is my second year attending Aspen. Target has been participating for many more than that and I thought I'd start by sharing some of the insights around why Target thinks it's important to participate.

So let me start with a little bit about us. We have 1,800 stores across the United States. We have 14 global sourcing offices around the world, 350,000 team members, and of course the countless guests that come into our stores and visit our website to shop every single day. And so I thought as I was getting ready for this my colleague and friend, Paul McCabe, who heads our corporate security group, recently made a statement which is the following: "Target has always given back." And that is so incredibly true.

I've been with the company a year-and-a-half and I continue to be amazed at the amount of give back that we give to our communities whether it's through financial support. Some of you may know we give over \$4 million dollars a week to various efforts. But it's not all about the money. Because of the team members and guests we have, we are constantly focused on improving the communities that they live in, that they work in.

And part of that, especially in today's environment, is how do we keep those communities safe. We have very longstanding partnerships with law enforcement and our work with the Aspen Institute is another example of an opportunity where we give back. So we're thrilled to be here and we -- I really appreciate the opportunity to be part of this really incredible next few days. With that I want to turn to the main event.

Secretary Johnson -- I actually had the pleasure of sitting next to him at dinner last evening and got to know him a bit better. And I would sum it up -- I was overhearing someone approach him earlier and -- she approached him and said, you are amazing. I think that's

a pretty accurate description. So we're thrilled to have him speaking with us tonight.

I'd also like to introduce Thom Shanker who'll be moderating the discussion with the secretary. I want to make sure I get Thom's career correct. So he's -- currently is the assistant Washington editor at *The New York Times*. He was previously the *Times*' Pentagon correspondent for about 13 years covering areas like Afghanistan and Iraq.

Prior to that, he was the *Chicago Tribune*'s Europe correspondent where he covered the wars in former Yugoslavia. He was the Moscow correspondent through coup and the collapse of the Soviet Union. He also coauthored a *New York Times* bestseller called *Counterstrike: The Untold Story of America's Secret Campaign Against Al-Qaeda*. So he's had a pretty uninteresting career obviously. So with that I want to welcome both Thom and the secretary to the stage. Hope everyone has a wonderful time and enjoy the evening. Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. SHANKER: Good evening, everybody. Hydration is life. I've spent most of my adult life covering military operations around the world. So I've spent a lot of time in tents, but never one as nice as this. So for that I want to offer a special thanks.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: Great new deployment.

MR. SHANKER: Yes, exactly, and lovely colors too -- not exactly camouflage, but it works. So with that, special thanks to all of the Aspen Institute staff for organizing this event today, and of course Walter Isaacson, the Aspen Institute President and CEO, and Clark Ervin, director of the Aspen Institute Homeland Security Program. The opening speaker -- and we have a sellout standing room audience which shows the great interest in your topics, Mr. Secretary.

Jeh Johnson, of course, needs no introduction which is why I'm going to do it anyway because it's important to note a couple of things. He is in charge of the third largest cabinet department in the U.S. government. He has almost a quarter of a million personnel with 22 components. I sort of ticked off the list not from Wikipedia but from his website of what he's responsible for.

It includes counterterrorism, cyber-security, aviation security, border security, port security, maritime security, protection of our national leaders, the detection of chemical, biological, and nuclear threats to the Homeland, and response to natural disasters. And that's just your day job, right?

(Laughter)

Since his nomination in 2012 to his current job he's been on the defensive side of the House. But as all of you know, prior to that from 2009 to 2012 he was on offense. He was the Pentagon's general counsel involved in some of the most important national security decisions of the post-9/11 world. So Mr. Secretary, thank you for joining us this evening.

MR. JOHNSON: Thanks, Thom.

MR. SHANKER: The first question of course, as Clark mentioned, has to come out of the headlines around the world today. Dramatic and horrifying events whether its guns, bombs, a refrigerator truck, Lord help us, in just the last month the roll call of cities hit by terrorism is a -- is an honor roll of shame. Tell us, please, how is United States government adapting now in real time to an adversary, ISIS and others, who are constantly morphing and manipulating?

They are directly attacking, themselves, they are directing attacks, they're inspiring. And as we saw in Orlando and Nice, there may be no direct ties. How do we defend ourselves?

MR. JOHNSON: First, Thom, thank you for doing this discussion we're about to have. Thom, of course, is *The New York Times* -- almost all of us read *The New York Times* every day, I'm sure a number of us have read Thom Shanker before. Perhaps the most impressive thing about you that I know of is that you're one of Bob Gates' favorite journalists, so. That's what he told me.

MR. SHANKER: You probably just got me in trouble with my boss, but thank you.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: Okay. And I have to also say a tribute to the Aspen Security Forum. This is my fourth consecutive year here. I find these sessions to be incredibly informative and important. There are a number of senior DHS personnel who are here, will be participating in the program. I hope that everyone here has an opportunity to meet them. They are terrific people. They are terrific public servants. There are a lot of DHS people who are not here tonight as we speak.

And I talk about this because so often in our world good news is no news and nobody seems to be interested in the good news and the good work of Homeland Security day in and day out. But as we speak there are some 2,600 DHS people in Philadelphia dealing with the security of the Democratic National Convention along with the Philadelphia police department, Pennsylvania state police. Secret Service coordinates it all -- Homeland Security Investigations, TSA manning the magnetometers at the entrance points, Coast Guard, a number of other things.

We've got thousands of our people on the ground protecting the public, protecting the convention participants, and of course the protectees of the Secret Service. So you ask a big question -- how are we adapting? I always tell our people that in this evolving threat environment we have to anticipate the next terrorist attack, not the last one. There is a temptation to surge resources in response to the last attack and

dedicate things toward -- you know, if it's an airport we focus on airport security.

If it's a public gathering on the street we focus on public safety on the street. If it's a nightclub we focus on nightclubs. I tell our people constantly we've got to focus on the next attack, let's anticipate the next attack as well as learn the lessons from the last attack. We are in an evolving environment. Just since I've been in national security in this administration I have watched us evolve from terrorist-directed attacks principally from al-Qaida affiliates, AQAP, the al-Qaeda elements of Al-Shabaab.

And the answer there was take the fight to the enemy overseas in places like Yemen and Somalia, get them before they can get us, get them before they can put on the suicide vest and go to the next airport and try to get on an airplane to come here. That's what our counterterrorism focus was in the first term. Now we see not only the rise of ISIL but the rise of the terrorist-inspired attack where the operative may not have met a single other member of the terrorist organization that he is inspired by, may never have trained with the organization, have never been to Iraq, Syria, and is -- may not have ever received a direct order from a terrorist leader, but is inspired by something in social media, on the Internet, to go commit an attack.

That makes for a much more complicated threat environment. It is harder to detect by law enforcement, by our intelligence community. As Jim Comey likes to say, it's like looking for a needle in a haystack and looking for the grain of hay before it becomes needle. So it's a much more complicated environment which requires a whole-of-government approach. So militarily we continue to take the fight to terrorist organizations overseas. We are taking back territory from the Islamic state. We are degrading their ability to communicate. We are degrading their ability to self-finance.

But it doesn't stop there. It can't stop there. You can kill an enemy and not defeat an enemy in this existing environment. And so -- of course there is the

law enforcement effort. The FBI does an excellent job. They are aggressive in their counterterrorism efforts. We continue to be concerned around aviation security. Pete Neffenger, the TSA Administrator who was here, is doing a terrific job in that regard. Of course continued security around soft targets, around federal buildings and installations, our Federal Protective Service in the Department of Homeland Security.

We have added security around our Visa Waiver Program. We're building the capability to monitor the travel of individuals of suspicion from overseas into the United States. I want to add to our preclearance capability at airports overseas where we screen people on the front end rather than when they get here to the one-yard line. But there is very, very definitely a role for the public to play in this environment. I know we've kind of become accustomed as public servants. Do not ask the public for something other than your tax money.

In this environment there is a role for the public to play. The public can and has made a difference through vigilance, awareness. And there is a role for the public to play. We've built upon the "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign. We're entering into partnerships with the NFL, Major League Baseball, and the like. And then of course last but not least is the CVE effort. We refer to it inside the Beltway as CVE. We love acronyms -- countering violent extremism -- which means building bridges to communities in this country, particularly American-Muslim communities.

And I say that plural on purpose because they are diverse. You know, the Somali-American community in Minneapolis is very different from the Syrian community in Houston. But building bridges to these communities to help them help us counter violent extremism by those in those communities in their midst who may be headed in this direction. It is almost always the case if not always the case that when someone self-radicalizes, acquires weapons of mass violence, somebody sees the warning signs.

And so building bridges, encouraging people to if they see something, say something is in my judgment as

important as any other Homeland Security mission in this existing environment. I've seen us adapt to this environment significantly just in the last 2-1/2 years since I've been secretary. But we got to continue to adapt and be agile and be very cognizant of the direction we are heading. I talked about -- I'll stop talking in a minute -- but I talked about terrorist-inspired attacks.

It's becoming even more complex than that because within the realm of the terrorist-inspired attack you can have, you know, the terrorist-validated attack where ISIL may claim credit for something after it occurs. There's this new category that the FBI uses called the terrorist-enabled attack which is something a little more significant than terrorist-inspired. So it's becoming increasingly complex is the short answer to your question, and we are adapting as we speak. We've done a lot just in the last several years to adapt to this.

MR. SHANKER: I want to pick up on one thing you said, the success on the battlefield. The territory of the caliphate is shrinking under attack of the U.S. and its allies. But the ISIS leaders are now telling a lot their would-be jihadists, stay home, don't come here, carry on the fight in your homeland. Are you seeing that today as an increasing risk here in the U.S.?

MR. JOHNSON: It should be apparent that when it comes to the homeland, ISIL's principal objective is to inspire people to stay at home and commit terrorist acts, self-radicalize. For ISIL it's low cost, low risk versus trying to export somebody through our borders, through our ports of entry, through our airports, through our various different layers of mechanisms to detect an individual of suspicion. Which is why, you know, public vigilance, public awareness, and our law enforcement efforts, and our CVE efforts are so critical.

Western Europe is in a bit of a different situation because of their proximity to Iraq and Syria and just the nature of things. But that is why the center -- central component these days of our counterterrorism efforts are, in my judgment, the prospect of the HVE here in the homeland.

MR. SHANKER: Right. And you've done a lot of outreach to communities. You've taken reporters with you to Ohio and Minnesota, even the suburbs of Washington and Virginia. But on your outreach to the Muslim communities in America, to young men at risk of radicalization, there's sort of an elephant in the room. And I use that metaphor wisely -- it's the symbol of a certain political party.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: No comment.

MR. SHANKER: I'm not asking you -- I'm not asking you to violate the Hatch Act.

MR. JOHNSON: Don't ask me to violate the Hatch Act.

(Laughter)

MR. SHANKER: I'm not asking you to campaign or to endorse. But Mr. Secretary, I think it's a really fair question to ask you, given your commitment to countering the violent extremist message when a presidential candidate and his trusted surrogates start suggesting that this nation should apply religious tests about who can come here and even inquire of our own citizens whether they follow Sharia law, a religious sniff test. I just have to ask you does that make your job harder, and does that make America safer or less safe?

MR. JOHNSON: Preface, preface, preface. I cannot comment and should not comment on what the candidates for elective office say. No, full stop.

MR. SHANKER: Just between us.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: Between us -- full stop. I have been probably -- between me and George Selim over there, who's the head of our Office for Community Partnerships,

we have been to probably every major metropolitan area in this country with a significant Muslim population. And building bridges to these communities is crucial. Further bringing them, integrating them into the fabric of our society is crucial to our Homeland Security efforts. Acquainting them with our government, our law enforcement efforts -- we're not just this big, bad entity that, you know, you think profiles you at airports.

Here we are. Here is the Homeland Security guy live and in the flesh. That is crucial to encourage them to help us. Rhetoric that vilifies American-Muslims and Muslims in general is counter to that effort, that is counter to our homeland security efforts. It is a setback to our homeland security efforts. Given the nature of the threat we face -- and I keep saying this -- it is critical that we build bridges to these communities so that they are encouraged to root out, identify, intervene when they see somebody who is going in the wrong direction.

So I gave a speech last September, Westminster College, where Winston Churchill gave his famous Iron Curtain address, about how overheated rhetoric that fans the flames of fear, suspicion, and prejudice has consequences. And I think it is crucial for those of us in public office, those of us who command a microphone -- again this is not a comment on anybody running for office -- those of us who command a microphone to be responsible in their rhetoric because overheated, irresponsible rhetoric has consequences.

MR. SHANKER: Do you include in that calls to use the label "radical Islam"?

MR. JOHNSON: No, not -- no, I don't quite put that debate in the same category. I think it is a reasonable debate to have. In my day-to-day Homeland Security world, though, it is not relevant to whether we put somebody on a no-fly list, whether somebody is a lawful military objective for targeted lethal force, whether somebody is arrested and charged with a terrorist act, irrelevant whether you call them Islamic extremist or violent extremist.

I mean I can't -- I can honestly tell you I can't remember those baseball cards when I was at DOD that I'd have to sign off on. I can't remember whether they said Islamic extremist or violent extremist as long as the person was a lawful military objective and the collateral damage assessment was there. So day-to-day practically speaking, it doesn't matter what label you put on these guys as long as we are preventing them from entering this country, as long as we are arresting them and charging them when there is a crime about to be committed, and as long as we continue to take the fight militarily to these groups.

Now, where I believe the label does matter -- and I view this in practical terms -- at some point I'll -- you know, when I leave office and I have time to research this more thoroughly, I want to fully understand the debate on both sides. But day-to-day where it matters is what I consistently hear in American-Muslim communities, whether it's Somalis, Pakistanis, Syrians, what I consistently hear is ISIL has hijacked my religion and they do not represent Islam.

They are a terrorist organization claiming the banner of Islam, but they do not represent any aspect of my religion. And to refer to the Islamic state or al-Qaeda as Islamic extremism suggest and buys into the notion that they occupy some aspect of my religion, which is offensive to us. So in our efforts to build these bridges if we walk in the door -- George and I walked in the door and said, we got to do something about these Islamic extremists, help us out, you know, you've got a problem in your religion, we're not going to get very far.

That's viewing things in very, very practical terms. This debate about -- this political debate about Islamic extremism versus violent extremism is interesting, but day-to-day it is of no consequence in terms of who we arrest, who we take down, who we prevent from coming in the country, and who we kill.

MR. SHANKER: Great. Thank you. Another thing that we have to cover this evening of course is the issue of race relations in America today. Because this is a

security forum I like to recall that Admiral Mullen, when he was chairman of the Joint Chiefs, talked about the economy in the Pentagon budget and said, if we're broke we're not safe. And I think that applies to race relations in America --

MR. JOHNSON: Economy in the Pentagon budget --

MR. SHANKER: Yeah, you know --

MR. JOHNSON: -- is a term I haven't heard too often.

MR. SHANKER: Yeah, right. Well, you know, that this nation's economic wellbeing and how we spend the money is important. I think that also applies to the issue of race relations -- not that it's broken, but it's certainly bruised and at least brittle. The most recent *New York Times* poll said that 69 percent of Americans say race relations are generally bad. It's the worst number since '92. The Rodney King case. I -- there's something that's -- I'd like to ask you at sort of a personal level because this is probably your last Aspen Forum as a member of the Obama administration.

You can come back as a private citizen and speak, but I would like to ask you about something that you did. In May you delivered the commencement address at Georgetown University, The School of Foreign Service. I had a very senior level source in inside who said that you told the students and faculty that you tore up your speech and wrote a new one at the 11th hour to reflect upon race in America. Now, as a journalist I can't express opinion, but this very senior source inside said the audience was very, very moved by your decision. Can you talk a little bit about what you see in America today that prompted you to take that somewhat dramatic act and share with those students your views on race today?

MR. JOHNSON: Well, I have some experience with race in America about 59 years' worth. Like the President, I take the long view of race relations in this country. My great grandfather was a slave. He was an emancipated slave. My great grandfather, my grandparents,

and my parents grew up with Jim Crow where they were second-class citizens in law and in fact. My mother grew up in Northeast Washington.

She still remembers on Maryland Avenue seeing FDR's convertible on Saturdays. He was out for a drive with the dog and she still remembers seeing him drive by with the Secret Service chase car. And it was -- would have been and still is beyond my mother's comprehension that her son now has a secret service chase car.

(Laughter)

In that Georgetown speech I talked about my grandfather who was a sociologist. He was president of Fisk University, and he was present at Fisk University during the late '40s, the early '50s -- the Red Scare. And if you were a black man with a Ph.D. and you wrote on civil rights, invariably in that period the suspicion was on you that you were somehow affiliated with the Communist Party. And so my own grandfather had to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee to deny he was a member of the Communist Party.

MR. SHANKER: Because he was African-American.

MR. JOHNSON: Because he was African-American, I suppose, and because he wrote a lot of things about, you know, the radical concept of equal rights for black people. And when I talk about it being beyond his comprehension that his grandson would be in charge of Homeland Security for this nation, the House Un-American Activities Committee used to hold its hearings in room 311 in the Cannon House Office Building which is the very same room in which I have to testify before the House Homeland Security Committee about our efforts to protect the homeland.

So on the arc of history just within the last 70 years we have made dramatic strides in race relations from Jim Crow segregation in law and in fact where my ancestors, my parents, my grandparents were second-class citizens, to where we are today, where we have a black family that is the First Family of the United States.

That was beyond my comprehension as recently as 20 years ago. Now, do we have flash points? Do we have tensions? Have we had more recently? Absolutely, unequivocally, yes.

But if you take the long view, as I do, I believe that we will work them through, through more aggressive community policing, more aggressive community relations building by urban police forces, by police forces in moderate size cities. And I believe we can and we will do that. We've actually done that before and I think we know how to do that. Police departments that reflect the community and look more like the community -- we know how to do this. And so I am optimistic in that regard. I'm not surprised at the poll that you cited. I believe it is a short-term phenomenon that we will address.

MR. SHANKER: So you see it as a 2-year problem not another generational 20-year problem?

MR. JOHNSON: I hope and believe that this is not a generational problem. I have taken note of the fact that a lot of people involved in black lives matter, involved in wanting to bring about changes in police practices approach civil rights "in a wholly different way" from -- well, not wholly different but in a different way from my parent's generation and my generation which learn from my parents. I'll never forget the T-shirt I saw one day on a photograph -- "This is not your mother's civil rights movement."

And that's kind of wakeup call to somebody who's 59 years old. Our kids, our college-age kids and they're always telling me, dad, you don't know a thing. You're being left behind, dad and --

MR. SHANKER: I thought it was just my college-age kids who said that. Makes me feel a lot better.

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: So I am optimistic and I take the long view.

MR. SHANKER: Well, that's helpful. I want to leave plenty of time for audience questions. So I have a small question and a big question. I'll ask the small one first. You quoted Secretary Gates earlier. I'd like to quote another defense secretary who probably wouldn't say I am his favorite, Don Rumsfeld.

(Laughter)

And I used to always have to tell my editors that just because Rumsfeld said something doesn't automatically make it wrong.

(Laughter)

And Rumsfeld issued a very cautionary word that I think is very relevant today. He used to note that when he was nominated and confirmed in early 2001 -- he had hours of hearings -- the word "Afghanistan" was not mentioned once, and of course "9/11." So as you look to handing over the reins to your successor who will have a confirmation hearing, what is the question that you think he should be asked that nobody is asking?

MR. JOHNSON: That's a good question. I would say are you -- the question should be, are you personally prepared to spend time and use the weight and authority of your office to build bridges to communities in our homeland in which ISIL is attempting to recruit. I think that is vital for the secretary of Homeland Security to play that role and to be personally comfortable playing that role, whoever that is, whoever the next secretary of Homeland Security is. So that is -- I mean that is certainly question one.

My department is still a work-in-progress in terms of eliminating the stovepipes. And so, you know, I think that the next secretary has to be as committed as I think I have been to management reform, to removing the stovepipes, making our department function more effectively and efficiently. There is a huge management and management reform component to this job -- getting

this huge 22-component, 29,000-person agency to function like it should for the American people.

MR. SHANKER: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: So those are the two things. That's -- those are two things that come to mind.

MR. SHANKER: Right. Now here's my larger question -- it follows on your point about ISIS perfectly. I'm a native of Oklahoma City which of course suffered a horrific attack of domestic terrorism. Timothy McVeigh bombing the Murrah Federal Building, hundreds of people killed including small kids at a daycare. How did Oklahoma City respond? It is a red state through and through.

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah.

MR. SHANKER: But the capital of this red state voted tax increases year after year after year to rebuild the city. Oklahoma City today is a far better place than when I grew up.

MR. JOHNSON: I was there for the 20th anniversary.

MR. JOHNSON: Right. And there's no better way to say to Timothy McVeigh, you murdering son of a bitch, you lost. Look at this great city around us today. There's a climate of fear in America. And even though the administration talks about resilience, there still is not the sense of resiliency that I see specifically in Oklahoma City, that one sees in Israel. Even French officials, after the Nice attack, were saying, this is the new normal, we have to get used to it. And they were criticized.

What do our political and government leaders have to say to speak truth to the American people without instilling fear but making them more muscular in their resilience?

MR. JOHNSON: Good question. Two things. One, I think it is incumbent upon us in public office to accurately and fully describe the homeland security threat. That's one of the reasons I revised our National Terrorist Advisory System last year. But to quickly follow that in the same statement with what we are doing about it to protect you. Here are the 10 things we are doing to protect the homeland. People are entitled to know what their government is doing to protect them.

But then you have to go on to say -- and it's not just scare the crap out of people -- tell them what's happening, but then tell them what you're doing about it and say, and you can help us by public vigilance, public awareness, followed by the message that terrorism cannot prevail if people refuse to be terrorized. And we are in fact a very resilient nation, whether it's Oklahoma City -- and I was there last year for the 20th and you look at how Oklahoma City has rebuilt itself while still memorializing what happened.

It's no accident that after the Boston Marathon 2013 something like 50 percent more runners signed up in 2014. You look at Lower Manhattan now and how it has rebuilt itself; the new Freedom Tower which is taller than the Twin Towers. It is a new New York when you go to Lower Manhattan now. And so we are a resilient country and we do bounce back. I still remember on September 12, 2001, people in Manhattan came to work, people in Lower Manhattan came to work.

My former colleagues in the Pentagon, the day after the Pentagon was attacked, came to work in the E ring. So we are in fact a resilient country. We tend not to run and hide and retreat in the face of a catastrophic terrorist event. History shows that time and again. And I think it's important to remind the American people about their own character and resilience.

MR. SHANKER: So you think this current sense of fearfulness is passing?

MR. JOHNSON: I think that there is a way to channel the sense of anxiety now into a more positive and

constructive awareness about how we can support our Homeland Security, Law Enforcement officials and how we can ourselves contribute to our own homeland security. I'm not supposed to promote books, but Juliette Kayyem has a terrific book, *Security Mom*. And it's about, you know, homeland security in the home. And there is a role for the public to play. So those are really my thoughts on this point.

MR. SHANKER: Thank you. In the moments remaining I'd love to get questions from the audience. You would stand up, there will be a microphone brought to you. Please identify yourself. And as they say on *Jeopardy!* make sure it's in the form of a question. Sir.

MR. JOHNSON: Hello, General. How are you?

MR. DUNLAP: Very good, sir. Great to see you. As you look at your finishing your --

MR. SHANKER: For those of us who don't recognize you, could you please identify yourself?

MR. DUNLAP: Oh, I'm sorry. Charlie Dunlap, retired Air Force officer. Had pleasure of working for Mr. Johnson in another life.

MR. JOHNSON: Former deputy judge advocate general of the Air Force.

(Applause)

MR. DUNLAP: Well, as we look ahead and you think about your successor, one of the things about being in public life -- the financial sacrifices, the scrutiny, the sheer weight of the job, are you -- what -- do you think we're still going to get the right people to take those kinds of jobs? And is there anything we should be doing? Should we ease up on the financial -- are there things that we can do to enhance the right people wanting to do these jobs? Because I'm hearing a lot that a lot of people just -- they won't even consider these senior jobs anymore.

MR. JOHNSON: Charlie, you ask a big question. In terms of are we recruiting the right people, I am -- I know a number of people in public service -- let's start with the career force. You know, the reality is that the SES force in our federal government does a lot to run the government itself. We have terrific SES personnel who day-to-day run our government that is kind of below the radar for a lot of the American public.

But our career super senior bureaucrats who really make things run, who are extraordinarily capable and qualified. I don't want to embarrass anybody here but I will a little bit. I was able to recruit two people into senior positions, senior political positions at DHS out of retirement. Just -- they must have been a little crazy to do this and subject themselves to a Senate-confirmed presidential appointment, but they came out of retirement to go through the vetting, to go through all it takes to get to the position that they are in now.

And these are merit-based appointments, and I'm very proud of that. Getting to -- it's crazy. I've gone through three Senate confirmations now, and I will never go through another one. You know, there's the vetting process on the front end with the --

MR. SHANKER: Said will never go through another --

(Laughter)

MR. JOHNSON: I'll never go through it again. There's the vetting process on the front end which is the financial vet. The -- there -- some young lawyer you don't know is going to violate your privacy eight different ways and ask you all these very personal questions about your background for cabinet level position. When you fill out the FBI form you have to go back to age 18, every place you've ever lived, every country you've ever visited, every foreign national you know, complete financial disclosure, disclosure of your clients. Then once you're nominated, welcome United States Senate into the process.

And that in and of itself is an episode which can take a month or a year and you don't know. And of course there's the scrutiny of once you're in the job, the financial disclosure, the public pressure, the political pressure. It's a -- it is walking a tightrope across a big, open valley in national security, in homeland security. But it has been the most fulfilling, rewarding part of my career. I have been for two-thirds of my adult life a corporate lawyer. My public service is the thing I am by far most proud of.

It will be the first paragraph of my obituary, I'm sure, and it has been the most rewarding for me. And so I tell people, particularly young people -- I like to talk to young law students, undergrads about the virtues and the values of public service because it is fulfilling to serve your country, to serve your community. It's important. I think a basic desire of all of us is to do good and to help others, which is what public service is all about. And so I continue to be optimistic. But it's -- it is very difficult to get there first.

MR. SHANKER: Yes, sir.

SPEAKER: (Off mic.)

MR. SHANKER: Sir, there's a microphone coming to you if you wait just a moment, please. There it is.

SPEAKER: Thank you.

MR. SHANKER: Thank you.

SPEAKER: Excluding so-called lone wolf attacks, what is the likelihood in your opinion, sir, of virtually eliminating or significantly eliminating multi-person attacks -- a multi-person attack as in Brussels or Paris over the next, like, 5 years, 10 years? Can we degrade ISIL that much or is it hopeless?

MR. JOHNSON: The people -- the other way people ask me that question is what keeps you up at night. And I used to say everything keeps me up at night and you have to focus on all of it. I will acknowledge that the thing

that most keeps me up at night is the next Orlando- San Bernardino-type attack by someone who has radicalized in secret and I believe that addressing we're going to be at this for a while addressing this type of event.

In Homeland Security you have to look at all threats, all hazards. Some are high impact but low probability. Others are higher probability. And so we have to prioritize in this way. And frankly, the -- you know, the HVE attack is the thing that I worry most about, and that's what is front and center in our current and task bulletin.

SPEAKER: Yeah, thanks.

MR. SHANKER: Yes, ma'am.

MS. HARRIS: Hi, Gail Harris with the Foreign Policy Association. I have a question about cyber. What if ISIS or a nation state takes down the electric grid in five of our major cities? Now I know Homeland Security, Cyber Command, and FBI all have a role. But who would be in charge of -- in that scenario?

MR. JOHNSON: Couple of things. First, just yesterday the President signed a directive that publicly clarifies the roles of the various components of the U.S. government in cyber security. And basically what this PPD does in a rather clever way is to differentiate between a threat response and an asset response. And it says that for threat responses Federal Law Enforcement is principally responsible, though we're all in a coordinated way involved. And for asset response the Department of Homeland Security is the lead.

So basically what the PPD does is clarify. There's the cop and there's the firemen. Jim Comey is the cop and I'm the fireman. So when you want to report the crime, the hack, the threat, you go to Law Enforcement. If you need somebody to help you put out the fire, plug the vulnerability, prevent it from spreading, and root out the bad actor from your systems -- the Department of Homeland Security is in the lead. We were also tasked

with writing over the next 180 days a national cyber response plan for critical infrastructure.

We have been working with utilities, power grids, developed a working -- we have developed a working relationship. We go through exercises with utilities now. The earthquake in Japan was a bit of a wakeup call a couple years ago. And so we're much more focused on cyber attacks on critical infrastructure. Which is why I want to reorganize our National Protection and Programs Directorate which is run by Suzanne Spaulding over there, into a cyber and infrastructure protection agency so that we in a lean and mean way marry up our cyber experts with our critical infrastructure protection experts into one agency working side by side.

And that requires congressional approval. The House Homeland Security Committee is interested in this. I'm hoping they will push it through the entire House and then we get it through the entire Senate. But addressing cyber events focused on critical infrastructure is and has to be a national priority.

MR. SHANKER: But aren't the bulk of national cyber capability still residing within the Pentagon?

MR. JOHNSON: Certainly for offensive capabilities, certainly for the protection of their own networks. But when you're talking about cyber security for the private sector and you're talking about cyber security for the federal/civilian dot gov systems, that is DHS in partnership with the FBI, NSA, DOD, and a lot of other components.

MR. SHANKER: Right. Thank you. Yes, sir, please.

MR. LAUREN: Don Lauren (phonetic) former military guy, government guy, old (inaudible). Thank you for joining us, sir. You and I had a discussion a while back at an HS-DBC event on congressional oversight. And I think the number is still about a 108 oversight --

MR. JOHNSON: I love Congress.

(Laughter)

MR. LAUREN: Yeah, sure --

MR. JOHNSON: I love Congress.

MR. LAUREN: In that spirit --

MR. JOHNSON: So write it down.

MR. SHANKER: Was that on the record?

MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, it was on the record.

MR. LAUREN: In that spirit, what are the top statutory authorities or changes you would like to see or you'd like for your relief to see in the next administration?

MR. JOHNSON: Principally two. One, we 2 years ago built joint task forces for border security on our southwest border modeled after the combat and command structure. When I go to the southwest border -- when I went to the southwest border I'd meet Border Patrol/Customs personnel, Immigration Enforcement personnel, even FEMA, CIS personnel. And the only person they had in common in their command structure was me. All dedicated to dealing with the crisis we had 2 years ago with the kids coming from Central America.

And so modeled after the structure we have right now in Arizona I established these joint task forces for the southwest, for the southeast, and a joint task force for investigations. We need Congress to codify that into law because there are certain legal restrictions on my ability to assign people to work in these task forces. I think it's something that has to happen both as a matter of border security and counter narcotics. So the House has passed this.

There's a package of what we call Unity of Effort initiatives that the House has passed that I've asked them to pass for codifying joint task forces, joint

duty assignments, and a joint requirements council and a couple of other things. That's priority number one. And I keep talking to the Senate about this. We tried to get this through the NDAA but it didn't work. We're going to keep trying.

Priority number two is what I just mentioned -- reorganizing NPPD into a cyber and infrastructure protection agency which takes congressional action. And so we continue to work with Congress to get these things done. I'm hoping that they do them this year.

MR. SHANKER: I have the sign for 5 minutes left and my ears reporting from conflict zones have taught me the most dangerous place a journalist can stand is between the audience and cocktails.

(Laughter)

So what I'm going to do is take two questions together, bundle them for the secretary to answer in the final. Yes, ma'am, in the red in the very, very back row. And then we'll take one more from this side.

MS. DOZIER: Kim Dozier with *The Daily Beast*. Secretary Johnson, you have been fighting violent extremism at the Pentagon and now at DHS. Leaving office do you feel a sense of frustration or failure? Is there something that you think you could have done better to defeat it faster? And could we see a time when terrorist attacks in this country are as common as they seem to be becoming in Europe or parts of the Middle East?

MR. SHANKER: Thanks. Hold that and --

MR. JOHNSON: I'm sorry, what was the second question? Sorry.

MS. DOZIER: Could we see a time when terrorist attacks in this country could become as common as they seem to be becoming in Europe and across the Middle East?

MR. SHANKER: Hold that. And the last question. Yes, ma'am, here on the aisle.

SPEAKER: Last year we talked about the Internet cyber and I wondered if some progress had been made as to taking down those websites that seemed to be the ones that create the training for these terrorists. And I remember that this was something that was going to be looked into. And I was wondering whether any progress had been made. Seems as soon as a terror attack happens, the first thing that they do is go and get the computers to see what they've been doing.

MR. SHANKER: Thank you.

MR. JOHNSON: Let me answer the last question first. We have had conversations with the tech sector about Internet service providers taking down content that violates their terms of service. Various companies have, I think, just recently made considerable strides in that regard. But it's a difficult task and is becoming increasingly difficult for Internet service providers, trusted flaggers to identify prohibited content because of the increasing sophistication in which terrorist organizations launch this stuff in multiple places very quickly, and it's like chasing a rabbit.

But I think we've made some progress just in the last 12 months. George can answer your question more specifically. What could we have done differently? I think that we are making considerable progress now in encouraging European nations to do more about border security monitoring, the travel of suspicious individuals, aviation security and the like through our -- through the influence we have on members of our Visa Waiver Program. We have asked countries for HSPD-6s -- that's a condition of being in the Visa Waiver Program with increasing frequency.

We have encouraged countries to use API/PNR -- that's travel data -- and a bunch of other things. We are working with the government of Turkey right now helping them in a lot of these ways. This is something that we're doing in a concerted way now. And I kind of wish we had started this in a more concerted way earlier. That's a --

I think that's a -- I think that's something that we had not been as focused on as we needed to be in the past.

Your last question about are we looking at a period when things become as common and as frequent as they are in Europe, 50 years ago -- I have a photograph from 50 years ago when my father, me, and my little sister went to visit the U.S. Capitol. And our car is parked in a public parking space about 150 feet from the western front of the -- eastern entrance to the Capitol. Just -- you could drive up, park your car in public parking 150 feet from the U.S. Capitol Building.

Those days are long gone, unfortunately. Aviation security then was a fraction of what it is now, and we live now with the threat of terrorism. We live now with small-scale attacks with increasing frequency. I believe that if we continue our efforts to not only take back territory from terrorist organizations but degrade their ability to communicate and recruit and inspire, we will take away a lot of the energy and the intensity of what we are seeing right now. That's something I believe in and I think that's something that we all should strive for. And we certainly do in national security every single day.

MR. SHANKER: Right.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

MR. SHANKER: To all of you who've joined us, thank you, to Aspen people -- Secretary, thank you for (inaudible).

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you.

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