



Homeland
Security

March 14, 2024

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)
PO Box 14596
Washington, DC 20044

Dear CREW:

Thank you for your October 4, 2023, letter regarding the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) efforts to address domestic violent extremism within the Department. I am responding to your questions on behalf of the Department.

Question 1: What progress has been made since the 2022 internal review to improve the detection of domestic extremists within the department?

The Department has made progress in implementing all of the recommendations outlined in the internal review report, including the following actions: implemented the Insider Threat Executive Steering Committee to oversee the implementation of the recommendations; drafted policies and updated training modules to cover the identification and reporting of prohibited activities related to domestic violent extremism; established a communications plan to remind employees of the obligation to refrain from participating in violent extremism activities; participated in a multi-department working group that revised questionnaires for public trust and national security positions; hosted regular meetings with industry, academia, and interagency partners on the use of publicly available electronic information; and expanded insider threat detection and information sharing capabilities.

Question 2: Will the department implement the recommendations made in the internal review? Which recommendations?

As you noted, the Secretary has stressed that domestic violent extremism has no place at DHS. The Department remains committed to preventing, detecting, and responding to threats related to domestic violent extremism within its workforce and is working to implement all the internal review recommendations.

Question 3: Will you update the public when the recommendations are adopted?

The Department has provided updates on the implementation status of the internal review report recommendations to congressional committees, members, and staff.

Question 4: Will DHS take actions similar to those outlined in the guidance on Countering Extremist Activity Within the Department of Defense?

In early 2021, the Secretary of Defense directed a department-wide stand down to educate employees on the threat posed by extremist activity and the establishment of a working group to implement directed actions and develop additional recommendations. Likewise, the Secretary of Homeland Security issued a statement directing an internal review of how best to prevent, detect, and respond to violent extremism in the workforce. DHS also issued department-wide direction for leadership to conduct discussions with their employees on the importance of preventing violent extremism throughout the DHS workforce.

The DHS internal review report recommendations were like the actions and recommendations identified in the *Report on Countering Extremist Activity within the Department of Defense*, focusing on the development of policy, employee awareness, training, and capabilities to identify indicators of violent extremist activity. DHS is working to implement all the internal review recommendations and continues coordination with the Department of Defense through DHS' crosstalk events with the interagency, private industry, and academia to discuss violent extremism, publicly available electronic information, best business practices, and lessons learned.

Question 5: Will DHS do an evaluation to determine whether and what decision making on and in the days leading up to the January 6th insurrection was potentially compromised by the presence of domestic extremists in the department?


As stated in the internal review report, the working group identified four incidents that involved active participation or support for violent extremist activity over the covered period. None of the four incidents involved decision making on and in the days leading up to January 6, 2021.

The Department leverages a range of policies, procedures, and tools to prevent, detect, and respond to domestic violent extremism within its ranks, while ensuring the protection of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties of individuals. DHS uses background checks as a preliminary tool to screen prospective employees. Once employed by DHS, employees are continuously vetted to ensure they maintain high standards of honesty and integrity; maintain loyalty to the U.S. Constitution, laws, and ethical principles; do not engage in outside activities that conflict with official government duties and responsibilities; and avoid any actions that violate the law or ethical standards. If an employee or contractor is suspected of engaging in unlawful or prohibited acts, the Department will begin preliminary investigative efforts in coordination with law enforcement authorities as appropriate. If an action is determined

to be noncriminal, but in violation of DHS policy, the appropriate DHS office or agency will be notified to facilitate disciplinary action up to and including removal, if necessary.

DHS appreciates your concerns and commitment to addressing the threats posed by domestic violent extremism. Should you have any additional questions, please contact the DHS Office of Partnership and Engagement at NGOEngagement@hq.dhs.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Fayrouz Saad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Fayrouz" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Saad".

Fayrouz Saad
Assistant Secretary of Partnership and Engagement