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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

KOLAN L. DAVIS, *Chief Counsel and Staff Director*  
KRISTINE J. LUCIUS, *Democratic Chief Counsel and Staff Director*

February 11, 2016

### VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Jeh Johnson  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary  
Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretaries Johnson and Kerry:

Information has come to the Committee's attention that the Administration is preparing an interview surge of prospective Syrian refugees that is scheduled to commence on or about February 14, 2016. More specifically, United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) is preparing to send approximately 200-300 agency employees to a location in Amman, Jordan, to interview thousands of purportedly Syrian candidates for resettlement to the United States that have been gathered at the same location. This plan, detailed in internal emails, is referred to within USCIS as the "MARKA" surge, and provides that deployed personnel will be at the location in Amman for at least 45 days.

We continue to be troubled by the Administration's plans to admit 10,000 Syrian refugees, especially in light of the shortcomings in the Department of Homeland Security's ability to adequately screen and vet such refugees, as has been discussed in hearing after hearing in both the House and the Senate over the past few months. The Administration's refusal to suspend or even slow the pace of such refugee processing is particularly disturbing when reports abound of ISIS terrorists intentionally inserting themselves into the Syrian refugee stream.

On February 9, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper told the Senate Armed Services Committee that ISIS is "taking advantage of the torrent of migrants to insert operatives into that flow."<sup>1</sup> On February 5, the head of Germany's domestic intelligence agency confirmed that Islamic State militants have slipped into Europe disguised as refugees.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ryan Browne, "Top intelligence official: ISIS to attempt U.S. attacks this year," CNN (Feb. 9, 2016), available at <http://www.cnn.com/2016/02/09/politics/james-clapper-isis-syrian-refugees/index.html>.

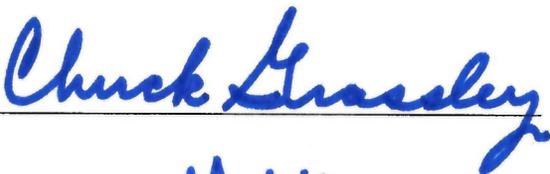
<sup>2</sup> Caroline Copley, "German spy agency says ISIS sending fighters disguised as refugees," Reuters (Feb. 5, 2016), available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-germany-security-idUSKCN0VE0XL>.

We strongly support efforts aimed to improve vetting and background investigations, however, it appears that the purpose of the MARKA surge is aimed at little more than expediting the resettlement timeframe. To learn more about the Administration's plans to process Syrian refugees, including how vetting will be improved by the MARKA initiative, we ask you to respond to the following questions:

1. Exactly how many USCIS employees will be sent to Jordan to process Syrian refugee cases?
2. When will these USCIS employees be sent to Jordan and how long will they stay?
3. From which USCIS offices will these employees be taken? Please provide an office-by-office breakdown.
4. What sort of training will these employees be given prior to departing for Jordan?
5. Will USCIS be sending staff from its Fraud Detection and National Security directorate to Jordan as part of the MARKA surge? If so, how many?
6. Will the FBI, other members of the intelligence community, or any other law enforcement agency personnel be deployed with USCIS staff as part of the MARKA surge?
7. How much will the MARKA surge cost USCIS and from which accounts will the necessary funds be taken?
8. How much will it cost to post a single USCIS employee in Jordan for a 45-day period?
9. How many Syrian refugees will be processed during the MARKA surge?
10. What is the role of the Department of State in the MARKA surge?

We request that the Departments respond to this letter no later than February 22, 2016. Should you have any questions, please contact Kathy Nuebel Kovarik of the Committee staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,

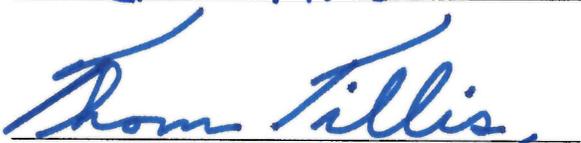
  
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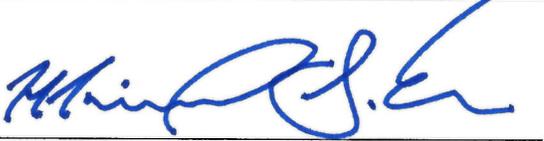
  
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