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And Global Counterterrorism

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Good morning, Chairwoman Sanchez, Ranking Member Souder and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Rick Seiter, and I am Executive Vice President and Chief Corrections Officer of Corrections Corporation of America. I am honored to be here today to testify on behalf of CCA, but I am also pleased to be able to share with you my perspective based upon 30 years of experience in the corrections and detention field. Prior to joining CCA in 2005, I spent most of my career in public service – working for 20 years with the Federal Bureau of Prisons in a variety of roles including warden at two facilities, and as Assistant Director of the Bureau's Industries, Education and Training Division during which time I served as Chief Operating Officer of Federal Prison Industries. Additionally, I was also the Director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction – a cabinet level position overseeing the operation of 18 facilities, a staff of 8,000 employees and an annual budget of \$400 million. I further served as Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at St. Louis University.

As Chief Corrections Officer for CCA, I oversee the operation of all 65 facilities managed by the company and its 16,000 employees. As background for you, CCA is the sixth largest corrections and detention system in the country, public or private. We manage more than 70,000 inmates and detainees and serve nearly half of all states, local governments and three federal agencies including the Federal Bureau of Prisons, ICE and the U.S. Marshals Service.

For nearly 25 years, Corrections Corporation of America has provided safe, secure and humane detention services on behalf of the Department of Homeland Security's Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement. In fact, our first contract as a company was with this agency (then INS) in 1983 at a CCA facility in Houston, Texas. That contract for the Houston Processing Center remains in place today -- an example of the quality of service and reliability our company provides to our government partners.

In my testimony I would like to provide members of the Subcommittee with an overview of our role in the immigration enforcement process. With that in mind, it is important for members to remember that CCA does not set immigration policy regarding who should be detained and on what grounds. That is a role that is clearly and appropriately vested with Congress and the Administration.

Our mission as a company and as a service provider to ICE is to meet the agency's needs by safely, securely, and humanely managing a portion of their detention population as they await

immigration adjudication and deportation proceedings in accordance with the law and ICE standards. Currently, CCA has seven detention facilities throughout the country for which the primary or exclusive customer is ICE. CCA's trained professional detention staff is responsible for the care of nearly 6,000 individuals who have been detained by ICE.

At these seven facilities, CCA works closely with ICE staff to ensure that our contracted facilities are meeting all applicable detention standards. These standards include ICE detention standards, applicable federal and state laws, as well as professional accreditation standards such as those of the American Correctional Association (ACA) and the National Commission on Correctional Healthcare (NCCHC). CCA is routinely audited by ICE to ensure contractual compliance. In fact, a typical facility that we operate for ICE has between 30 and 80 ICE staff on site depending upon the size of the facility. CCA's ICE-contracted facilities are frequently accessed by federal, state and local government officials as well as immigration attorneys and advocates. In short, the level of oversight and scrutiny of these facilities is extensive and is welcomed.

An example of this oversight and accountability can be found at the T. Don Hutto Family Residential Facility in Taylor, Texas. This facility was contracted to support ICE in May 2006 as a major component of the effort to end the practice of "catch and release." It is our understanding that the Department of Homeland Security believes that this facility provides an effective and humane alternative to maintain the unity of alien families as they await the outcome of their immigration hearings or the return to their home countries.

Since the facility opened in May 2006, we have worked closely with ICE to develop policies and procedures to address the unique mission of this facility. We are keenly aware of and sensitive to the special needs of the families that reside there and have taken significant steps to create the best possible environment for these families for the short time they are in our care. In that regard, we made major renovations to the facility, and many security measures, such as concertina wire atop perimeter fencing, have been removed. Housing areas were modified to ensure privacy and allow families the opportunity to socialize and interact with one another. Doors to individual family living areas provide ample privacy; however, as appropriate for the unique mission of this facility, these doors are not locked to maximize freedom of movement. Carpeting, homelike furnishings, plants, curtains, televisions and video games were added to housing units and other areas of the facility. Highchairs, play pens, and children's toys are provided. Outdoor recreational areas were modified to allow for soccer, basketball, baseball, and ping-pong. There is an outdoor covered picnic area, two large playgrounds and an indoor gymnasium supplied with toys and sports equipment available daily.

Families live and eat meals together. We are very proud of the seven-hour day of educational classes and recreation provided for school-aged children. As well, recreation is provided daily for adults and children 4 years old and under. All families are together before and after school. Our school is staffed by eleven teachers, a principal, and other educational staff and is operated year round to provide age-appropriate instruction. Core curriculum instruction is provided for students in English language arts, math, social studies and science. Additional instruction is provided with enhanced curriculum subjects such as computer training, music, art and cultural

activities as well as physical education. Medical services for the center are provided by the U.S. Public Health Service in accordance with ICE standards.

Since its inception, CCA and ICE have worked closely together to create an environment suitable for families. All activities of the operation have been worked through ICE staff at the facility, at the San Antonio field office, and at Washington headquarters. In fact, ICE maintains 33 staff at the facility on a daily basis including a senior-level Officer in Charge and deportation officers, immigration agents, and administrative staff that oversee removal proceedings and monitor the contract. In addition, 25 Public Health Service staff are at Hutto to provide medical services to residents.

We recognize and welcome this level of oversight of our management of Hutto as well as our other ICE-dedicated facilities around the country. The Hutto Residential Center is a new and evolving program. We have learned and made adjustments over the past few months to meet the needs of this unique population. We are proud of the partnership and professionalism demonstrated by our staff and their ICE counterparts who work on a daily basis in all of our facilities to meet the agency's critical mission. We value the confidence that ICE has placed in us for nearly 25 years and strongly believe that our work exemplifies the best qualities in public-private partnerships. I believe we provide ICE the flexibility to respond quickly to changing developments and to meet its increasing demands in a safe, humane, and cost-effective manner.

In conclusion, I would invite members of the Committee to visit the Hutto facility and any other CCA facility to see operations first hand. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and look forward to responding to any questions you might have.