



The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) supports the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) as it secures the nation while preserving individual liberty, fairness, and equality under the law.



Update to the National Terrorism Advisory System

DHS recently announced an [update to the National Terrorism Advisory System \(NTAS\)](#), an alert designed to communicate information about terrorist threats by providing timely, detailed information to the public.

The NTAS will now consist of two types of advisories: Bulletins and Alerts. DHS has added Bulletins to the advisory system to be able to communicate current developments or general trends regarding threats of terrorism. NTAS Bulletins permits the Secretary to communicate critical terrorism information that, while not necessarily indicative of a specific threat against the United States, can reach homeland security partners or the public quickly, thereby allowing recipients to implement necessary protective measures. Because DHS may issue NTAS Bulletins in circumstances not warranting a more specific warning, NTAS Bulletins provide the Secretary with greater flexibility to provide timely information to stakeholders and members of the public.

The update to the NTAS will allow DHS to better achieve the goal of making sure the public has the information needed to keep themselves and their communities safer. This action is not in response to a specific, credible threat to the homeland, but is a prudent measure to ensure that the public is better prepared and aware of the evolving terrorist threats.

View the [current NTAS bulletin](#). DHS will soon post translations of the current NTAS bulletin. For more information on NTAS, visit <http://www.dhs.gov/ntas-frequently-asked-questions>.

Secretary Johnson Leads Roundtable at Northern Virginia Mosque

In early December, Secretary Jeh Johnson held a community engagement roundtable at the All Dulles Area Muslim Society (ADAMS) Center in Sterling, Virginia. The event was attended by area community leaders, law enforcement officials, local and federal elected officials, and diverse interfaith partners. Secretary Johnson convened the meeting in response to the attacks in San Bernardino and [delivered remarks](#) condemning the vilification of American Muslims and emphasizing the importance of partnerships with American Muslim communities to counter violent extremism in our current threat environment.

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During the roundtable, conversation focused on hate crimes and backlash against American Muslims, how communities can counter violent extremism, and building partnerships with law enforcement agencies. Following the meeting, Secretary Johnson held a press conference where he took questions related to hate crimes, countering violent extremism, anti-Muslim rhetoric, and government efforts to engage with Muslim American Communities.



Secretary Johnson holds a press conference at the ADAMS Center in Sterling, Virginia.

CRCL Opens Seattle Roundtable with Moment of Silence

CRCL convened its quarterly roundtable in Seattle just one day after the attacks in San Bernardino, California. The event, hosted by the Sikh American community, was opened with a moment of silence for the victims of the shootings. A Sikh American member of the U.S. Marine Corps gave a presentation on the various civil rights and civil liberties challenges the Sikh community faces and discussed their concerns for backlash against them as a result of recent incidents.

The roundtable was the largest held in Seattle since CRCL established the quarterly roundtable there in 2011. Representatives from diverse communities attended, including the Latino, Catholic, Chinese, Korean, Muslim, Jewish, Somali, and Turkish American communities. Officials from U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services and U.S.



Seattle roundtable attendees hold a moment of silence for San Bernardino shooting victims

Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Washington, Seattle Police Department, and staff from the offices of Senators Maria Cantwell and Patty Murray and Rep. Adam Smith (WA-9). Issues raised and addressed during the meeting included refugee screening and resettlement, recent incidents involving asylum seekers and those granted asylum, and watch listing of Sikh American citizens.

CRCL Leads Community Engagement Exchange Program in Sweden

CRCL led a delegation of Muslim civil society representatives from Chicago to visit Gothenburg and Angered, Sweden as part of the first phase of a U.S. State Department-sponsored community engagement exchange program. The program is designed to focus on immigrant integration and protection of civil rights and civil liberties, and address all forms of violent threats to society. Gothenburg, and the nearby borough of Angered, was chosen for the program given the city's recent challenges with several forms of violent extremism. At least 120 individuals from Gothenburg have traveled overseas to fight for designated terrorist organizations, giving it one of the highest per capita numbers of foreign fighters in Europe.

The Chicago delegation met with Chargé d' Affaires Robert Gilcrest, senior staff from the U.S. Embassy Stockholm, a host of community and civic stakeholders, and law enforcement. The delegation also conducted presentations on how civil society institutions in the U.S. play a vital role in helping communities to address grievances and build a more resilient society.

CRCL also presented its community awareness briefing, an interactive awareness-building tool designed to inform on violent threats that society currently faces. A delegation of civil and municipal representatives from Gothenberg is scheduled to visit Chicago for the second phase of the exchange in spring 2016. CRCL regularly partners with the U.S. State Department and international embassies to coordinate these exchange programs, which previously have involved delegations from the U.S. and Belgium, Germany, and other countries.



Chicago delegation participates in exchange program

DHS Releases Civil Rights Guidance on Unmanned Aircraft Systems

Unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) offer a variety of benefits for protecting our borders; supporting law enforcement; assisting in search and rescue operations; locating forest fire hot spots; evaluating dangerous environments (e.g., post-chemical spill and radiological exposure); conducting forensic imagery; inspecting pipeline and utilities; monitoring evacuation routes; and relaying telecommunication signals. However, the development of a new technology, significant improvement of a current technology, or the new application of an existing technology often results in concerns about the impact on individual privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties.

In this regard, CRCL, the DHS Privacy Office, and U.S. Customs and Border Protection jointly established the DHS Unmanned Aircraft Systems Privacy, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Working Group to “provide leadership to the homeland security enterprise by clarifying the privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties legal and policy issues surrounding government use of [Unmanned Aircraft Systems].” The working group has [published best practices to inform DHS and its local, state, and federal government partners and grantees](#) on ways to establish unmanned aircraft programs based on policies and procedures that are respectful of privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties. These best practices are consistent with the Presidential Memorandum: [Promoting Economic Competitiveness While Safeguarding Privacy, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties in Domestic Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems](#).

Governmental entities establishing UAS programs are encouraged to incorporate principles of transparency and accountability, while not revealing information that could reasonably be expected to compromise law enforcement or national security, and consider the issues that DHS has encountered in the context of developing its own policies and programs. These best practices are not prescriptive, but rather are provided to share the Department’s considerable experience operating unmanned aircraft systems in securing the nation’s borders and supporting communities during natural disasters and emergencies, and to provide unmanned aircraft system operators with privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties practices to consider before initiating a UAS program.

Although the intended audience is DHS and other government agencies, the private sector may also find these practices instructive in creating or operating unmanned aircraft programs. It is important that agencies work closely with legal, privacy, civil rights, and civil liberties experts to ensure compliance with applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations when developing a UAS program.

CRCL Presents on Community Engagement and Charitable Giving

CRCL delivered two presentations on community engagement best practices in Manama, Bahrain during the “Combating the Financing of Terrorism - Countering Violent Extremism Charitable Sector” international workshop. The day-long regional event focused on the importance of promoting transparent, vibrant, and safe charitable giving through institutionalized good practices to build trust and raise awareness. CRCL’s presentations were viewed as methodological best practices to institutionalize a whole of government community engagement program designed to protect civil rights and civil liberties (human rights in the international context) and address grievances, clarify policies, build trust, and raise awareness of all forms of threats facing society in a holistic issue-based approach. Both presentations were conducted in Arabic and English and were well received. Governments represented at the workshop included Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Oman, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, the United Kingdom, France, Italy, Belgium, and Canada.

CRCL Hosts UN Human Rights Council Delegation

Officer Megan Mack and Deputy Officer Veronica Venture recently hosted a meeting between DHS officials and a visiting delegation from the United Nations Human Rights Council’s Working Group on Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice. The focus of the Working Group is to identify, promote, and exchange views, in consultation with States and other actors, on good practices related to the elimination of laws that discriminate against women. During the meeting, discussion covered the work of the Blue Campaign and CRCL issues involving workforce diversity, immigration proceedings and detention affecting women and families, and the scope of DHS’s missions. Recently, the working group presented its findings at the U.S. State Department.

CRCL on the Road, November–December

November 7 – Boston, Massachusetts

CRCL attended the BRIDGES annual community engagement town hall.

November 18 – Columbus, Ohio

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

December 10 – Nashville, Tennessee

CRCL led in a Community Resilience Exercise in coordination with the National Counterterrorism Center.

December 16 – Atlanta, Georgia

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

December 17 – Los Angeles, California

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

November 12-13 – Minneapolis, Minnesota

CRCL attended a community engagement women’s conference.

November 23 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

December 16 – Miami/Dade, Florida

CRCL led a community engagement town hall in coordination with the U.S. Department of Justice.

December 17 – Denver, Colorado

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

December 17 – Tampa, Florida

CRCL convened its quarterly community engagement roundtable with diverse ethnic and community-based organizations.

Additional information, and contacting us

The goal of this periodic newsletter is to inform members of the public about the activities of the DHS Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, including: how to file complaints; ongoing and upcoming projects; opportunities to offer comments and feedback; etc. We distribute our newsletters via our stakeholder email list and make them available to community groups for redistribution. Issues of the newsletter can be accessed online at: www.dhs.gov/crcl-newsletter.

If you would like to receive this newsletter via email, want to request back issues, or have other comments or questions, please let us know by emailing crcloutreach@dhs.gov. For more information, including how to make a civil rights or civil liberties complaint about DHS activities, visit: www.dhs.gov/crcl.

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