

**Testimony of Anne C. Richard,
Assistant Secretary for the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Before the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
“Terrorist Travel: Vetting for National Security Concerns”
December 17, 2015, 9:00am**

Chairman Chaffetz, Ranking Member Cummings, and distinguished members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee regarding the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program and security vetting for refugees considered for resettlement in the United States.

In FY 2015, nearly 70,000 refugees of 67 different nationalities were admitted for permanent resettlement in the United States, including 1700 Syrians. In FY 2016, the President has determined that we should increase that overall number to 85,000, including at least 10,000 Syrians. We recognize that admitting more Syrian refugees to the United States is only part of the solution to the current global refugee and migration crisis, but it is in keeping with our American tradition. It shows the world that we seek to provide refuge for those most in need, it sets an example for others to follow, and it adds to the diversity and strength of American society.

Resettlement is offered to refugees who are among the most vulnerable – people for whom a return to Syria someday would be extremely difficult, if not impossible – such as women and girls at risk, survivors of torture, children and adolescents at risk, and refugees with medical needs, disabilities, and/or physical or legal protection needs. Families or individuals who could benefit the most from resettlement are referred to the US Refugee Admissions Program (USRAP) by the UNHCR.

I know the murderous attacks in Paris on November 13 have raised many questions about the spillover of not just migrants to Europe, but also the spread of violence from war zones in the Middle East to the streets of a major European capital.

Let me assure you that the entire Executive Branch, and the State Department that I represent, has the safety and security of American as our highest priority. As an essential, fundamental part of the US Refugee Admission Program, we screen applicants carefully in an effort to ensure that no one who poses a threat to the safety and security of Americans is able to enter our country. Consequently, resettlement is a deliberate process that can take 18-to-24 months. Refugees of all nationalities considered for admission to the United States undergo intensive security screening involving multiple federal intelligence, security and law

enforcement agencies, including the National Counterterrorism Center, the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center, and the Departments of Homeland Security, State and Defense.

Applicants to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program are currently subject to the highest level of security checks of any category of traveler to the United States. These safeguards include biometric, or fingerprint, and biographic checks, and a lengthy in-person overseas interview by specially trained DHS officers who scrutinize the applicant's explanation of individual circumstances to ensure the applicant is a bona fide refugee and is not known to present security concerns to the United States.

The vast majority of the three million refugees who have been admitted to the United States, including from some of the most troubled regions in the world, have proven to be hard-working and productive residents. They pay taxes, send their children to school, and after five years, many take the test to become citizens. Some serve in the U.S. military and undertake other forms of service for their communities and our country.

I am happy to answer any questions you may have about our refugee resettlement program or our contributions to aid refugees and victims of conflict overseas and our diplomatic efforts related to humanitarian operations around the world.

Thank you.



***Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration
Term of Appointment: 04/20/2012 to present***

Anne C. Richard was sworn in as Assistant Secretary of State for Population, Refugees, and Migration on April 2, 2012.

Prior to her appointment, Ms. Richard was the vice president of government relations and advocacy for the International Rescue Committee (IRC), an international aid agency that helps refugees, internally displaced and other victims of conflict. She was also a non-resident Fellow of the Center for Transatlantic Relations at Johns Hopkins University/SAIS and a board member of the Henry L. Stimson Center.

From 1999 to 2001, Ms. Richard was Director of the Secretary's Office of Resources, Plans and Policy at the State Department. From 1997 to 1999, she was the deputy chief financial officer of the Peace Corps. Earlier, she served as a Senior Advisor in the Deputy Secretary's Office of Policy and Resources at the State Department and as a Budget Examiner at the U.S. Office of Management and Budget.

From 1993 to 1994, Ms. Richard was an International Affairs Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations and was part of the team that created the International Crisis Group. From 1985 to 1986, she was a fellow of the Robert Bosch Foundation in Germany. She first joined the U.S. government in 1984 as a Presidential Management Intern.

Ms. Richard has authored several monographs and reports and numerous opinion pieces on topics including: international coordination of foreign assistance; combating terrorism; strategies to make foreign aid more cost effective; and specific humanitarian crises from Haiti to South Sudan to Afghanistan.

Ms. Richard has a B.S. in Foreign Service from Georgetown University and an M.A. in Public Policy Studies from the University of Chicago. She has lived overseas in Austria, Germany and France. She is married with two children.