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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 28, 2015

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Nebraska Avenue Complex
3801 Nebraska Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretaries Kerry and Johnson:

I write to you regarding recent reports of the U.S. government's efforts in both securing relief for Syrian refugees and in combatting the Islamic State. I am concerned that under existing standards there is a limited ability to conduct the necessary oversight of those coming into the United States as refugees.

It is of utmost importance to national security and the safety of the American people that the United States not allow any member of the Islamic State or any other terrorist entry under the guise of the Syrian refugee admission. Based on the fact that ISIS has a stronghold in Syria and surrounding areas where Syrian refugees have fled, I have serious concern with efforts that would conceptually disconnect the issues. It is paramount that in our effort to provide necessary assistance that we remember, that a majority of the 9/11 attackers were granted admission to the United States on a temporary immigration status. Recent reports from the intelligence community demonstrate that my concerns are shared by interagency departments.

Similarly, the turmoil Syrian refugees have suffered during this period of crisis has affected not only Syrian Muslims, but also minority groups as well. One clear example is Syrian Christians who have also suffered greatly at the hands of the Syrian civil war and ISIS. I specifically bring this point to the forefront amidst reports of disparate treatment of minority groups in the region. While I recognize the need for relief to Syrian refugees, minority groups and Syrian Christians should also be prioritized in light of the growing concerns.

I ask you to provide information on the following questions:

- 1.) Has there been an official assessment as to the level of concern ISIS infiltration poses? If so, what is that level of concern?
- 2.) Has that assessment been vetted by the Office of the Director of National Intelligence?

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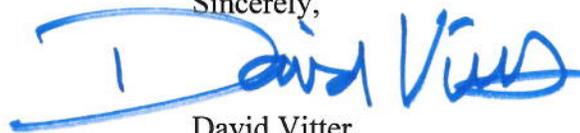
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- 3.) Do we have systems in place on the ground in Syria to collect enough information to properly screen refugees
- 4.) What additional protocols has the administration implemented to protect against the possible threat of ISIS infiltration among Syrian refugees seeking safe harbor in the United States?
- 5.) How many Syrian refugees to date have gained admission to the United States, and have any been determined to have ISIS relations?
- 6.) Is there a plan for handling any Syrian refugees, once admitted to the United States, who are deemed to have participated in terrorist activity prior to admission to the United States?
- 7.) What efforts has the United States made regarding the admission of Christian Syrian refugees?
- 8.) In proportion to the Syria's religious and ethnic makeup, are there comparable rates of admission for Christians and other minority refugees in relation to Muslim refugee admissions?
- 9.) Will the 10,000 Syrian refugee admissions for 2016 be in excess of the 75,000 total admissions Congress has allocated, or will those Syrian refugee admissions be part of the 75,000?
- 10.) What, if any, commitments has the administration made to other countries regarding the admission of a substantial number of Syrian refugees?
- 11.) What, if any, discussions has the administration had with other countries – affluent Middle Eastern countries, especially – regarding their willingness to provide admission to Syrian refugees?
- 12.) Will any Syrian refugees not admitted through the normal refugee admission process be paroled into the United States anyway?

I appreciate your assistance in this matter. My office is available to answer questions to support providing us this information. Please contact Josh Hodges of my staff at 202-224-4623. Thank you.

Sincerely,



David Vitter
United States Senate