



Testimony for the Record  
Submission to the

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs  
Hearing on "Examining the Weaponization of the Quiet Skies Program"

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Thank you Chairman Paul, Ranking Member Peters, for the opportunity to testify. My name is Abed Ayoub, and I serve as National Executive Director of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), the nation's largest and oldest Arab-American civil rights organization. Over the past 45 years, we have worked with and assisted countless members of our community who have been directly impacted by the government watchlist process.

**Let me say something that may surprise some people:** I have sympathy for MAGA supporters who are experiencing watchlist harms—missed flights, repeated screenings, frozen bank accounts, job consequences—without notice or a fair way to challenge it. I don't need to share their politics to understand that rights and liberties aren't conditional on agreement. What they are feeling today mirrors what Arab and Muslim families have endured for decades: a secret designation that follows you from airport to employer to consulate, with no clear explanation and no reliable fix. **That is not a partisan problem;** it is a due-process problem. When the government can quietly tag one group, it can quietly tag any group—left, right, or neither—depending on who holds power. The answer is the same for all of us: end the watchlist, or at minimum implement safeguards that protect our rights and liberties.

**Quiet Skies was a total disaster.** ADC welcomes Secretary of Homeland Security's decision to shut it down. Retiring a program that surveilled ordinary travelers without evidence of wrongdoing is a meaningful step toward fairness. But Quiet Skies captures only part of the story. It was a window into a faulty

surveillance architecture: secret lists, vague criteria, and downstream sharing that harm people who have done nothing wrong.

For decades, the watchlist has too often been a shortcut for suspicion—aimed at my community members not because of what we've done, but because of who we are and what we believe. People get flagged after visiting family overseas, donating to a lawful charity, attending a protest, or simply for praying. That's not security—that's punishment for religion and politics.

More than 98 percent of the names on the FBI's 2019 Terrorism Screening Dataset were Arab or Muslim. Placement on these lists does not require arrest, charge, or conviction. Instead, it is based on vague suspicion, often tied to religious practice or protected political speech.

**And let me again be clear:** if a tool can quietly target my community today, it can target any community tomorrow—journalists, activists, immigrants, gun owners, union organizers, pro-life or pro-choice advocates. Once a secret label replaces proof, the only limit is who's in power. End the watchlist. If you won't, cage it with real notice, evidence, hearings, and strict limits so no American's faith or viewpoint becomes a reason to be treated like a suspect.

Placement on the watchlist has a direct and dire impact that reaches beyond the airport. These harms underscore why there must be reform to allow for redress/removal from the list, the tracking of screenings, and assurances of appropriate oversight. The human and policy costs are real.

The task is larger than ending one program. Immediate steps must be taken to implement due process measures to afford those on the list an opportunity to be removed.

Many expert reports and opinions have provided a clear roadmap to fixing immediate issues. **First, require TSA and CBP to systematically track all screenings** and outcomes so we can see where the system fails and who is being hit hardest. **Second, direct the Terrorist Screening Center** to report regularly to Congress on nominations, removals, error rates, and recall of bad data, with safeguards to protect privacy while exposing patterns of bias. **Third, pair transparency with teeth:** mandatory timelines, independent review that can



order a delisting, and confirmation that corrections have been pushed to every system and partner that received the original record.

**The most urgent fix is transparency and due process.** If the government is going to restrict your liberties, you have a right to know why. DHS's Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (TRIP) provides little information to travelers about why they are flagged or whether corrections are applied across the system. Without systematic tracking, bias can go unchecked, and travelers have no meaningful way to correct errors. Today, individuals on watchlists often receive no notice, no explanation, and no meaningful path off the list.

This is not an abstract issue — it strikes at the heart of due process and equal protection. Secret government lists, shared across agencies and even with private actors, should never have the power to confer or deny a person's liberty without a meaningful way to challenge errors.

There is room for bipartisanship on this issue, I am confident of that. I'll meet anyone halfway on this—left, right, or neither—because the watchlist isn't about who you voted for; it's about whether the government has to prove its case before it limits your life.

That's a handshake we can make across this dais today.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, eliminating Quiet Skies was necessary but not sufficient. Congress must restore transparency, accountability, and due process to protect millions of travelers. ADC stands ready to assist in that effort.

Thank you,

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