

WASHINGTON (25 February) – During a House Homeland Security Committee hearing Thursday, U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), Ranking Member of the Homeland Security Committee's Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight, pressed Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano to take prompt action to bolster our nation's visa screening capabilities overseas in order to keep terrorists out of the United States.

BILIRAKIS: "How many Visa issuing posts are there overseas, currently?"

NAPOLITANO: "For the State Department?"

BILIRAKIS: "Yes, the State Department."

NAPOLITANO: "I don't know the overall number."

BILIRAKIS: "OK, can you tell me how many of these locations have Visa Security Units, currently?"

NAPOLITANO: *Turning to Staff* "A small percentage."

BILIRAKIS: "OK, I think it is about 14 from my estimations. How many have been identified as 'high risk' locations?"

NAPOLITANO: "Well, we just added two - I know that, in the past week. A number."

BILIRAKIS: "OK, my understanding is that there are 40 high risk locations, and the State Department has 220 locations and we have units in 14 locations."

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BILIRAKIS: "We want to make sure we beef up this program...my understanding is that the budget recommendation is flat for this year, and that is unacceptable to me."

END

"Based on the Secretary's answers to my questions and the insufficient budget request for the Visa Security Program, it is clear that this Administration is not serious about visa security," said Bilirakis after the hearing.

On January 21, Bilirakis sent a letter (.pdf [HERE](#)) to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano highlighting the need to expand the Visa Security Program and asking why the program hadn't been accelerated. The Secretary has yet to respond.