

SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND CONSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS  
AUSTRALIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE ORGANISATION

**Question No. AE16/025**

**Senator McKim asked the following question at the hearing on 9 February 2016:**

**Senator McKIM:** Are you currently in the process of assessing any of the Syrian humanitarian entrants?

**Mr Lewis:** Yes we are. I cannot give you a precise figure, but the process is underway and we have cases we are examining now.

**Senator McKIM:** Could you take on notice the figure in terms of how many of those 12,000 the department has asked you to assess?

**Mr Lewis:** I would like to speak with the department of immigration first.

**Senator McKIM:** I appreciate that.

**Mr Lewis:** But assuming that there is no impediment to that then perhaps I can come back to you with a figure.

**Senator McKIM:** I will place the question on notice and you can respond subsequent to your—

**Mr Lewis:** It might be that the department of immigration is in a better position because they have control over which ones they are bringing forward to us. There are other considerations which that department can and does take which are beyond ASIO's competence and so the figures may be a little skewed as a result of that, but I understand the point you are making.

**Ms Hartland:** It is also a process where we are working continuously with the department of immigration as well, so we have deployed staff in working with them. So in terms of numbers and where they are at, as the director-general said, it will depend on whether they have actually been alerted through the system when they come to us. So whether there has actually been any that have come through in that way, we will need to take that on notice.

...

**Senator McKIM:** Based on your previous answers, I acknowledge that some of my next series of questions you would need to answer on notice, if you were able to answer them. I will place that on the record first. I am interested in how many screenings have been completed. I think I asked that earlier, but if I did not, I ask that.

**Mr Lewis:** Are we talking about the 12,000?

**Senator McKIM:** I am specifically asking about 12,000. Certainly in my state of Tasmania there is a general expectation in the community that they are about to arrive. They have not. I am trying to explore what some of the delays might be. I am certainly not suggesting that you should not be conducting your work diligently. I encourage you to do so, not that you need my encouragement. I am wondering whether there are any blockages— perhaps blockages is not the right word—any reasons for the delay in this process. How many screenings have been completed, in relation to the 12,000? How many, if any, have been cleared? Okay, that is not your role.

**Mr Lewis:** We understand the questions you are asking. We will try to provide answers. Most of this lies with the Department of Immigration. For example, the answer may be affected dramatically by the way in which the immigration department is presenting the cases to us in terms of the degree of concern that that they may or may not have about them. For instance, are they taking people about whom there is absolutely no concern and who appear to be very simple cases first? If that were the case, our figure would be correspondingly low. I am not sure that it is a useful figure for you. It will have a whole lot of conditionality around it.

**The answer to the honourable senator's question is as follows:**

1. As a matter of course, all visa applicants are checked against national security holdings in Australia's Central Movement Alert List. As of 29 February 2016, approximately 766 applicants from this cohort have been referred to ASIO by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection.
2. As of 29 February 2016, approximately 644 of those cases have been assessed by ASIO.
3. Consistent with other cohorts, I am unable to provide a breakdown of how many non-prejudicial, adverse or qualified visa security assessments have been furnished by ASIO in relation to this cohort.