



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

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Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

From Cartels to Coastlines: An Examination of U.S. Federal Efforts to Confront Illicit Maritime Activities in U.S. Waters

June 10, 2025

I am glad the subcommittees are holding this hearing to help examine how the Trump administration's policies and practices are affecting illicit maritime activities. I have sat on this committee since its inception. I believe deeply in the Department of Homeland Security's mission statement which states, "With Honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values." I wish the Trump administration believed in this mission as strongly as my fellow Democrats and I do.

The actions of this administration are completely devoid of honor and integrity, and our homeland is less safe as a result. Just this past weekend, we witnessed President Trump send the military to the streets of Los Angeles to stop protests against immigration raids.

This is the same president who, in 2021, sat on his hands and laughed as actual insurrectionists stormed the Capitol Building, beat cops with weapons, broke windows, destroyed property, and looked to capture and kill elected officials. Trump would not call the National Guard when the police who protect this Capitol were being beaten to a pulp, but he did not hesitate to unnecessarily send them to Los Angeles.

Additionally, over the weekend, the Ranking Member of our Border Security and Enforcement Subcommittee, Congressman Correa, along with several other Members, were turned away from an ICE facility when they arrived to conduct oversight, in yet another example of the Trump-Noem DHS not following the law.

We are also witnessing the Trump administration pulling agents and officers off their regular duties to focus on deporting non-criminals—which takes them away from investigations into actual criminals and is making us less safe. Under this administration, HSI agents have less time to investigate child traffickers, gun smuggling, drug running, and other crimes because they are dedicated to deportations. The administration's direction for the Coast Guard is likewise misguided.

Secretary Noem stated in the Coast Guard's new Force Design 2028 plan that the Coast Guard "is fragile, in crisis, and on a path to failure... The Service is in a downward readiness spiral that is unsustainable. Without change, the Coast Guard will fail". So, what changes has Secretary Noem implemented to address this crisis and keep the Coast Guard from failing?

Most immediately, Secretary Noem is trying to have the Coast Guard fund a new \$50 million Gulfstream V jet for her to use, even as the service has many older aircraft in more urgent need of replacement. For an administration that is supposedly uncovering waste, fraud, and abuse, this request reeks to high heaven. Beyond that request, Secretary Noem has directed the Coast Guard to surge its limited resources away from its many critical missions, including in the Indo-Pacific and the Arctic.

Instead of using all available resources to counter Russia and China, the Coast Guard is now in the shuttle service business, flying gardeners, cooks, farmhands, and housecleaners from ICE detention centers to deportation staging facilities. It is a disservice to our constituents to divert our brave Coast Guard servicemembers from lifesaving missions to make them operate the Greyhound of the sky.

The Trump administration is placing deportations above all else, which undermines our homeland security and makes us all less safe. This administration does not represent the values on which this country was built, nor those on which the Department of Homeland Security was founded. To put it in maritime terms, President Trump and Secretary Noem have missed the boat. We in Congress need to help DHS correct course to meet its mission.

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