



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

### ***Exploring the Use of Unmanned Aircraft Systems Across the DHS Enterprise***

**April 1, 2025**

Drones are invaluable tools for law enforcement and fire departments. They assist with aerial surveillance, damage assessments, search-and-rescue operations, and monitoring large-scale wildfires—tasks once handled by crewed aircraft. DHS components like Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security Investigations, Secret Service, the Science and Technology Directorate (S&T), and FEMA use drones for critical operations.

In my home state of Mississippi, drones have played a vital role in assessing the damage caused by the devastating tornadoes that hit my district in 2023, which claimed the lives of at least 21 people. However, as we discuss the use of drones today, President Trump and Elon Musk are relentlessly attacking the very agencies working to secure the homeland.

Just last week, Secretary Noem and other Trump-Musk administration officials discussed dismantling the one agency dedicated to serving Americans after a disaster: FEMA. Secretary Noem is proud of this misguided effort, saying “we’re going to eliminate FEMA.” News outlets are reporting that FEMA may be abolished by October.

The Trump administration’s reckless push to eliminate FEMA is dangerous and a betrayal of Americans in need of support during the most vulnerable moments of their lives – when disasters strike. FEMA is not just an agency; it’s the lifeline that provides critical aid to communities before, during, and after disasters.

By attempting to dismantle FEMA, the administration is weakening the very infrastructure designed to keep Americans safe. With hurricane and tornado seasons just around the corner, this move will leave our communities even more vulnerable. Unfortunately, my colleagues across the aisle remain silent—complicit in this dangerous erosion of our homeland security.

FEMA also administers vital homeland security grant programs that defend us against the very real threat of terrorism. Many of these grant programs have been unlawfully paused by the Trump administration. Grants also fund the use of drones by first responders in our communities. Yet these critical grant programs have been either gutted, put on hold, or slowed down by the Trump-Musk administration. Again, my Republican colleagues remain silent.

Mr. Chairman, by failing to protect FEMA’s programs that support each of our districts. The Majority should be bringing administration officials here to testify about their actions and plans and make sure they preserve FEMA and critical homeland security grants programs. Instead, Committee Republicans have abdicated their oversight obligations and our Nation’s homeland security will suffer as a result.

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