



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Twenty Years After 9/11: First Responder Perspectives

September 9, 2021

The Committee on Homeland Security is honored to be in New York today to observe the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001. On that terrible day, terrorists hijacked four airliners and crashed them into the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and a field in Shanksville, Pennsylvania. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the deadliest terrorist attack in history.

Tragically, hundreds of firefighters and police officers lost their lives trying to save others. Many more heroes have since died from 9/11-related illnesses, or suffered physically, mentally, and emotionally. We will Never Forget all that was lost that day, and our Nation has been forever changed. Even our government has been transformed in the years since the attacks.

Stood up in the wake of 9/11, DHS and its local, State, and Federal partners have built a new homeland security enterprise to better defend our country against threats, minimize risks, and maximize the ability to respond to and recover from attacks. This very Committee was established in the aftermath of 9/11, and since 2002 has been charged with supporting efforts to secure the homeland and the American people.

In keeping with the Committee's purpose, and in memory of 9/11 victims, the Ranking Member and I wanted to bring the Committee once again to New York, to this hallowed ground. This morning, Members visited the 9/11 Memorial & Museum. We were reminded again of those we lost, especially the brave first responders who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their fellow citizens.

It is fitting that we meet today with New York first responders and Federal partners to discuss the progress made since 9/11, the challenges that remain, and how we, as Members of Congress, can support your efforts both today and in the days ahead.

We are grateful to be joined today by a distinguished panel:

- John Miller, Deputy Commissioner for Intelligence and Counterterrorism, New York Police Department (NYPD).
- Laura Kavanagh, First Deputy Commissioner, New York City Fire Department (FDNY).
- John Bilich, Chief Security Officer, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.
- Alex Amparo, Senior Official Performing the Duties of Deputy Administrator, Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).
- Captain Zeita Merchant, Commander, Sector New York, United States Coast Guard.

I appreciate the Committee Members who traveled here today, as well as those who call New York home, including Subcommittee Chair Yvette Clarke, Committee Vice Chair Ritchie Torres, and Judiciary Chair Jerry Nadler, in whose district we are meeting. I look forward to a productive discussion befitting this important occasion.

Securing the nation is a shared responsibility – one we must fulfill while upholding our most sacred values. I look forward to discussing with the panelists today how we can best support your efforts on behalf of the American people. The Committee on Homeland Security continues to stand ready to assist.

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