



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Federal Building Security: Examining the Risk Assessment Process

September 22, 2022

We are here today to discuss how the Department of Homeland Security assesses and manages the security risks of the many Federal buildings it is tasked with protecting. I would like to thank Chairman Correa and Ranking Member Meijer for holding today's hearing on this very timely and important topic. I would also like to thank the Federal Protective Service (FPS) workforce for their hard work and service to this country.

During the last few years, when many employees were working at home during the pandemic, FPS was still on the frontlines ensuring the safety and security of Federal employees and facilities. FPS is charged with protecting approximately 9,500 Federal buildings, spread across the country, as well as the more than 1.4 million employees, visitors, and customers that enter those buildings each day. Unfortunately, former-President Donald Trump's anti-government rhetoric has encouraged a dangerous surge in threatening language and actions directed toward Federal employees and property.

We have seen what can happen when threats against Federal facilities and employees are not taken seriously. Last year a violent attack on the U.S. Capitol demonstrated that these threats are all too real, and we must be prepared to defend against them. Since that tragic day, we have seen several lone wolf attacks on Federal facilities outside of our capital region.

FPS' role is to investigate and respond to these threats and to assist government agencies in preparing for and preventing any security incidents. In addition to providing security guards, FPS also delivers safety awareness trainings, assists with the drafting and implementation of facility-specific emergency plans, and regularly reviews all Federal facilities to identify any potential security gaps. These security reviews are an important resource for assessing whether buildings are equipped to meet the Federal security standards developed by the Interagency Security Committee (ISC).

The ISC, in coordination with FPS, seeks to ensure that all Federal property is adequately protected in the current threat environment — an environment that is ever-evolving. As the nature of threats changes, so must the Federal government's response. However, all too often roadblocks prevent agencies from implementing FPS's building security recommendations. Better communication is necessary to understand why these barriers exist and what can be done to overcome them without sacrificing the safety of government workers.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has made recommendations aimed at improving the utility of FPS' facility security assessments to help tenant agencies enhance the security of the buildings they occupy. For example, GAO has recommended that FPS improve the cost estimates it

provides tenant agencies for recommended security improvements so agencies can make informed decisions about whether and how to implement them. But this communication must go both ways. Tenant agencies should also communicate with FPS when they choose not to implement needed security improvements and explain their reasoning. This cooperation is essential for FPS to effectively carry out its mission.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how FPS and DHS more broadly can continue to improve the security of Federal facilities.

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