



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

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Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) *20 Years After 9/11: Transforming DHS to Meet the Homeland Security Mission* September 30, 2021

I have been a Member of this Committee since it was stood up, and I have witnessed the many challenges DHS has faced since it was established. For example, shortly after the Department's creation, it was placed on the Government Accountability Office's (GAO's) High-Risk List given the challenges associated with consolidating 22 existing Federal agencies into one new Department. After much progress, in 2013, GAO and the Department agreed to 30 specific outcomes DHS needed to achieve for removal from the High-Risk List.

I am encouraged by the fact that, over the last eight years, DHS has fully addressed 17 of these 30 outcomes. I look forward to hearing more about the Department's efforts to address the remaining challenges as well as any recommendations GAO has for achieving that goal.

One exercise that assists the Department in addressing challenges and establishing long-term strategies is the development of the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review (QHSR). The QHSR is a statutorily required, comprehensive examination of the homeland security strategy of the United States. Despite several public promises from DHS officials that its release was imminent, the Trump administration failed to issue the 2017 QHSR. Unfortunately, that means it's been seven years since the last QHSR was issued. While the Management Directorate is not specifically responsible for drafting the QHSR, I sincerely hope that current leadership completes a timely QHSR.

I am committed to ensuring that the Department is well positioned to meet the challenges it faces today. The Trump Administration left key DHS leadership positions vacant, undermining the Department's progress toward adequate coordination of policy, resources, and oversight.

Accordingly, in July, I introduced the "DHS Reform Act" to improve DHS operations and address lessons learned from the mismanagement, waste, and abuse under President Trump. The Act promotes continuity and confidence in Department leadership by placing additional restrictions on who can serve in "acting" roles. It also authorizes the Under Secretary for Management to serve a five-year-term, which will ease transitions from one administration to the next. And the Act takes steps to codify the spirit of former-Secretary Jeh Johnson's "Unity of Effort" campaign.

For example, the legislation would centralize oversight of DHS's multi-billion-dollar portfolio of acquisition programs under the Management Directorate. Furthermore, the Act strengthens constitutional protections in the Department's programs and activities by granting the DHS Privacy Office and Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties additional authorities and further integrating those offices with operational components. These are just a few of the Act's highlights, and I anticipate working with leadership at the Department to make these reforms a reality.

I also look forward to working with the Acting Under Secretary for Management – who has a wealth of experience serving in many roles throughout the Department – as well as the Chief Human Capital Officer on efforts to address challenges facing the Department. Finally, I always appreciate the straightforward testimony offered by GAO and look forward to hearing from Mr. Currie.

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