



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hearing Statement of Emergency Management & Technology Subcommittee Ranking Member Tim Kennedy (D-NY)

Surveying the Threat of Agroterrorism, Part II: Assessing Federal Government Efforts

February 11, 2026

I want to begin by saying that I appreciate the Chairman for bringing officials from the administration before our subcommittee. I hope to see more hearings with administration witnesses in the future. I would be remiss if I did not acknowledge the greatest threat to our nation currently, and with all due respect to our witnesses, it's not agroterrorism.

We are seeing a Department of Homeland Security that is killing our own citizens, terrorizing communities, ignoring court orders, rejecting due process, and advancing an extreme immigration enforcement agenda that is stoking fear, creating chaos, and degrading our democratic institutions. The Trump administration is also dismantling FEMA before our eyes, refusing to distribute critical counterterrorism grant funding and moving forward with plans to cut half of FEMA's workforce.

Mr. Chairman, yesterday, I sent a letter to your office to formally request that this subcommittee turn its focus to FEMA issues, including delays in preparedness and counterterrorism grants, workforce challenges, and areas for improvement in disaster recovery. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to insert this letter into the record.

Last year, I introduced a bill, H.R. 6507, the DHS Grants Accountability Act, which would require increased transparency and oversight of FEMA's counterterrorism grant programs, and I hope that's something we will have an opportunity to discuss on this subcommittee in the coming months. Turning to today's hearing, I agree that our nation must strengthen its biodefense, including better preparing for potential attacks on our agricultural systems.

This includes ensuring we have enough agricultural specialists at our borders to detect harmful pathogens, investing in research and development at U.S. institutions through USDA, and strengthening our supply chains to ensure they're resilient against potential bad actors. But the way to do this is not by closing DHS's Centers of Excellence or freezing funding for USDA university partnerships, including those that directly support agrosecurity.

One of these closed Centers of Excellence directly supported agrosecurity by researching and educating federal partners on how to detect and eliminate biological threats that cross our borders. And in my home state of New York, the administration halted funding for Cornell University's Animal Health Diagnostic Center, which tests livestock for diseases that could devastate agriculture sectors and our economy. This significantly impacts their ability to survey for high-consequence animal diseases. All of that is to say, the Chairman and I are in full agreement that we must strengthen our nation's capabilities against threats of agroterrorism, whether they be foreign or domestic, and I believe we do so by bolstering federal investments and resources rather than gutting them. This also means ensuring our customs facilitators have the resources needed to survey biological threats.

I have four bridges that connect my district in Western New York to Canada. I represent some of CBP's agricultural specialists who report to work at U.S. ports of entry and contribute every single day to our collective biosecurity. So, I understand the importance of ensuring our nation is hardened against any biological threats, and I appreciate the Chairman's work in this space. I want to thank our witnesses for participating in today's hearing, and I look forward to your testimony as we assess DHS and USDA's preparedness in keeping our communities safe.

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