



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Securing the Nation's Ports and Maritime Border — A Review of the Coast Guard's Post 9/11 Homeland Security Missions

June 14, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Securing the Nation’s Ports and Maritime Border — A Review of the Coast Guard’s Post 9/11 Homeland Security Missions”:

“This year we will mark the tenth anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

That event changed our Nation and, in the process, changed the shape of the Federal government.

With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, numerous disparate agencies, including the Coast Guard, were brought together to help secure the country.

In my congressional district along the Mississippi River, people think of the Coast Guard for its safety and security and search and rescue missions, particularly during terrible flooding like we have experienced this year.

But in the wake of 9/11, the Coast Guard’s homeland security missions have become more important than ever.

The Coast Guard’s work securing our ports, waterways, and coasts is an integral part of America’s homeland security.

With that in mind, I am concerned about the lack of adequate funding for several vital Coast Guard programs and initiatives in the recently passed DHS Appropriations bill.

For example, the bill cuts funding for Coast Guard acquisition and construction by \$270 million below the President’s request.

This is unacceptable.

The Coast Guard prides itself on being “Always Ready” for all hazards and all threats in carrying out its eleven statutory missions. However, without adequate resources it will be hard-pressed to meet that enormous challenge.

Congress must ensure that the Coast Guard has the funding necessary to fulfill its responsibilities on behalf of the American people.

Also, I would be remiss if I did not touch on Coast Guard’s role in the Transportation Worker Identification Credential or “TWIC” program.

Along with the Transportation Security Agency, the Coast Guard is responsible for implementing the TWIC program.

The program has been plagued with problems from its inception.

It is my hope that the long-overdue TWIC readers will be deployed as quickly and efficiently as possible so that the full security benefits of the program can soon be realized.

America's maritime workers have done their part by obtaining TWICs – it is time DHS to deliver as well.

I have had the opportunity to meet with Admiral Papp at Coast Guard Headquarters, and have seen the good work of the men and women of the U.S. Coast Guard firsthand.

Today, I hope to hear about the Commandant's commitment to ensuring the Coast Guard fulfills its homeland security missions, with support from Congress.

I thank Admiral Papp for joining us today and I look forward to a robust dialogue about the Coast Guard's role in the security of our Nation.”

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