

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Homeland Security Investigations: Examining DHS' Efforts to Protect America and Secure the Homeland***

July 7, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Oversight, Investigations, and Management subcommittee hearing entitled “Homeland Security Investigations: Examining DHS’ Efforts to Protect America and Secure the Homeland”:

“We are here to discuss the work of Homeland Security Investigations, a division of ICE responsible for a wide range of duties.

From investigations involving the illegal production, smuggling, and distribution of counterfeit and pirated products to money laundering violations and worksite immigration enforcement efforts, ICE Homeland Security Investigations is called upon to handle these matters on very stretched resources.

ICE’s Homeland Security Investigations International Affairs unit also represents the largest investigative law enforcement presence abroad for the Department of Homeland Security.

Yet, according to ICE and the Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator, they are required to do much with very little.

This Congress, the Majority passed H.R. 1, which cuts \$350 million from the Department of Homeland Security budget for border security and technology.

Despite these financial and staffing challenges, the Obama Administration has made numerous advances in confronting both worksite enforcement and intellectual property issues.

For example, Operation Network Raider, a collaborative interagency initiative aimed at ending the illegal distribution of counterfeit network hardware manufactured in China, resulted in 30 felony convictions and over 700 seizures of counterfeit hardware valued at more than \$143 million.

In Fiscal Year 2010, ICE intellectual property investigations are up more than 41 percent, arrests are up more than 37 percent and Department of Homeland Security intellectual property seizures are up more than 34 percent.

Regarding worksite enforcement, in April 2009, the Administration shifted the country’s focus from large-scale raids, which cost millions and yielded minimal criminal convictions, to focusing on unscrupulous employers that hire – and sometimes exploit – undocumented immigrants.

Prior to this shift in strategy, ICE conducted numerous high-profile worksite raids that were high on cost but low on substance.

In August 2008, one of the largest raids occurred in Laurel, Mississippi, where over 600 workers were detained. Approximately 475 of the 600 workers were detained; yet according to reports, only eight appeared in federal court to face criminal charges.

This form of military-style raids destroyed families, disrupted local economies, and had a negative impact on small towns and rural communities.

The new approach represents an aggressive enforcement strategy that targets the worst employers.

A major focus of this strategy is the audit of Form I-9 Employment Eligibility Verification Forms.

ICE's use of Form I-9 audits to test an employer's compliance with existing documentation laws has skyrocketed from 254 in Fiscal Year 2007 to 2,196 in Fiscal Year 2010.

Furthermore, forced removals are at a record high -- 393,000 in FY 2009, up from 30,000 in FY 1990) -- as well as detentions, which are at a record high of over 360,000 in FY 2010, up from 95,000 in FY 2001.

But let me be clear, enforcement alone will not fix our immigration system.

Congress can no longer delay enacting comprehensive immigration reform and should immediately do what the American people demand: fix the broken immigration system, not enact more piecemeal policies that don't solve the problem.

I am looking forward to receiving the testimony of our private sector witnesses.

However, I know that it is ultimately the responsibility of multiple federal partners to enforce our immigration laws and prevent counterfeit goods from entering into our supply chain. ICE, CBP, FDA and the newly-created Intellectual Property Enforcement Coordinator could have provided helpful testimony on existing challenges and recommendations for staying ahead of changes in technology that make intellectual property theft a constantly moving target.

Furthermore, testimony from ICE would have revealed the strides that have been made under the country's new worksite enforcement approach. Unfortunately, they were not invited to testify and as a result, the record will not reflect the facts they could have provided."

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