

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

The Attacks of September 11th: Where are We Today

September 8, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The Attacks of September 11th: Where are We Today”:

“Today, we meet to discuss this nation’s progress in bringing about safety, security and resiliency against terrorism since the attacks of 9/11.

But before we look back, I want to acknowledge and remember all the firefighters, police officers, and ordinary people who lost their lives that Tuesday morning. Remembering those who died must inspire us to make this nation better and safer.

Mr. Chairman, there is no doubt that the events of September 11, 2001 brought about fundamental changes to this nation. The events of that morning changed just about everything we know about aviation security, information sharing, and disaster response and recovery.

Over time, this government has changed its policies and practices. The American people have changed their expectations.

Today, most people regard many new security measures as a reasonable price for security. But as we enter the second post-9/11 decade, we must begin to question the price we pay.

Between 2004 and 2010, the Department spent nearly \$300 billion to secure our nation.

Several initiatives have improved our security and eliminated many vulnerabilities we once faced. Increases in the number of Border Patrol officers, the establishment of Secure Flight and US VISIT, the revitalization of FEMA and the new attention to securing chemical and biological materials have all improved our security posture.

All these things have been good and necessary. But as we reflect on the past ten years, we cannot pretend that progress has been steady and unimpeded.

Many have pointed to the growth in homeland security spending and the reliance on outside contractors as the beginning of a homeland security industrial complex which may undermine our security in the long run.

I cannot isolate the cause for this incredible increase in spending, nor can I deny that Congress’ inability to consolidate jurisdiction is a contributing factor.

That splintering of jurisdiction has fractured every aspect of the Department’s operations and decreased its ability to operate effectively and efficiently. The inability of Congress to provide the Department with one strong and steady hand has created opportunities for the network of

companies and consultants who many call the Beltway bandits.

I hope the Chairman will work with the leadership to assure that these jurisdictional hurdles are overcome. This Committee must pursue strict legislative and oversight jurisdiction of the Department.

Mr. Chairman, as we recall 9/11, we must remember that the terrorist attacks of that day have caused us to fight a new kind of war. The war on terrorism has not only been waged in Afghanistan and Iraq, but has also been fought on our shores. A recent study reports that nearly 200 terrorism cases have been brought in U.S. Courts since September 11th. Nine out of ten of those cases have ended in convictions.

We should be proud of our success in engaging threats here at home.

But our work in securing this nation must also assure our rights and freedoms. The 9/11 Commission understood this necessity and recommended a Privacy and Civil Liberties Oversight Board. Today, that board is still not functional. I hope my colleagues will join me in requesting that appointments be made to this Board.

So, as I consider our progress since 9/11, I would call it a mixed bag. We have made strides but still have miles to go before we can rest.”

[Link to GAO Report](#)

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For press inquiries, please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>
[@homelanddems](#)