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**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson**

***The United States Secret Service: Examining Protective and Investigative Missions and Challenges in 2012***

September 14, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee hearing entitled “The United States Secret Service: Examining Protective and Investigative Missions and Challenges in 2012”:

“The United States Secret Service has a unique mission. No other agency is charged with the responsibility of protecting the President, Members of the Cabinet, visiting heads of state and the leadership of the United States Congress.

If the Secret Service has a bad day, the nation has a bad day. These unique responsibilities cannot be viewed lightly and cannot be done “on the cheap.”

This Congress must commit to spend the resources necessary for the Secret Service to fully perform its mission. However, the House-passed Homeland Security Appropriations bill allocated the Secret Service \$25 million less than their request. So I am pleased that you called this hearing. We need to know how these cuts will affect the Secret Service in 2012.

But before we look forward, we must first revisit our past. Director Sullivan last testified before this Committee following security breaches at a White House State Dinner.

This Committee’s investigation called into question inadequate security procedures at the White House and exposed vulnerabilities that could have endangered the lives of the President, the First Family and countless dignitaries.

I am told that substantial changes have been made since that hearing. I look forward to hearing about those changes.

Mr. Chairman, the upcoming Presidential election campaign, the G-20 and NATO Summits, leave little doubt that this Committee’s oversight function must involve assuring that the Secret Service couples adequate resources with appropriate procedures.

However, we cannot ignore that with adequate resources, the Secret Service has encountered problems in overspending. It is my understanding that the agency has taken steps to improve its financial management systems and integrate its process with DHS procedures. I look forward to hearing about the new systems.

I particularly want to hear about how procurement decisions are linked in this system. I raise procurement because of all the controversy surrounding the Secret Service’s two new \$1 million buses. While some were concerned about the price, I was concerned about a procurement process that permitted these non-American-made vehicles to be purchased. I look forward to hearing your explanation of that process and reviewing the documents.

Finally, Director Sullivan, when you testified before the Committee in 2009, you presented a plan to increase diversity at the Secret Service. I look forward to hearing about the implementation of that plan.

But I must register my continuing concern about the Secret Service’s apparent foot-dragging and non-

compliance with court orders in the on-going Moore discrimination matter. I do not understand how a law enforcement agency cannot itself be diligent about complying with court orders. The lack of progress in Moore and other discrimination cases has made it difficult to believe that diversity is a value when discrimination is permitted.

Despite some of my concerns, I am steadfast in my belief that the Secret Service must succeed. Their mission is vital to our national security and our national identity. I look forward to working with you to ensure their success.”

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