

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****TSA Reform: Exploring Innovations in Technology Procurement to Stimulate Job Growth***

September 22, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security subcommittee hearing entitled “TSA Reform: Exploring Innovations in Technology Procurement to Stimulate Job Growth”:

“Under the Democratic Majority, we held several hearings on:

- the role of the Science and Technology Directorate;
- TSA’s technology vetting and approval process;
- the need for DHS to align research with its mission; and
- examining whether research fulfilled mission-critical needs of the components.

I am pleased that the oversight begun under our watch continues today. As we conduct oversight and consider steps toward reform, let us also assure that S&T has sufficient funding to do its job.

As you know, S&T is in line to take a major cut to its budget in the upcoming fiscal year. Programs will need to be scaled back and promising projects may be eliminated. Mr. Chairman, I hope you can work with us to stop these drastic cuts.

Today’s hearing will evaluate the Department’s process to develop, procure, and deploy innovative technologies. It would have been helpful to have someone who currently works for the Department testify today.

But I do look forward to hearing from Mr. Jackson and Ms. Duke, former Department employees. While they are unlikely to shed light on the current process, I hope they can shed light on the process used during their tenure.

Some experts have said that the failure to employ an effective process led to the “Puffer” machine fiasco.

For those who may not recall, I want to take a moment to recount the Puffer machine story. The Department purchased these high-tech checkpoint screening machines for about \$150,000 each.

We were told that the machine would spray a short puff of air on a passenger. The machine would then analyze the debris that fell from the passenger and determine whether the passenger had been near explosive materials. In the lab, the machines seemed to work. The maker promised that they would work. And so TSA ordered over 200 of them.

However, in the real world, the machines were useless. They did not work and there was no way to make them work. After spending nearly \$30 million to buy and maintain the nearly 100 Puffers deployed TSA finally retired the machines. At one time, these machines were touted as a high-tech response to aviation security. Now they are sitting in a warehouse and we have wasted \$30 million.

Why did this happen? It happened because the research, development and testing of the technology was disconnected from the real world use of the machine.

We cannot allow another incident of this kind to occur. Every dollar we waste on ineffective technology is a dollar that will not be spent to secure this nation. The puffer machine fiasco happened while Mr. Jackson and Ms. Duke were at the Department.

I look forward to hearing from them about how the system that was in place then allowed the procurement of these machines. In the last few months, the Obama Administration has attempted to reform the research, development, and procurement practices at S&T. I hope that Mr. Jackson and Ms. Duke will share with this Committee the difficulties they found in their attempts at reform.”

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