



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?

February 3, 2012 (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 “Is DHS Effectively Implementing a Strategy to Counter Emerging Threats?”:

“The purpose of the hearing is to determine whether the Department of Homeland Security is effectively implementing a strategy to counter emerging threats.

Five years ago, it was clear that the Department was beset with management challenges, low morale and an unclear path forward.

As a result, I sponsored the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act, which among other things, directed the Department to conduct a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, or QHSR.

This review now serves as the strategic framework for DHS and the Nation’s homeland security agenda.

Moreover, along with President Obama’s National Security Strategy, the QHSR included emerging threats that had not been sufficiently addressed by prior Administrations.

For the first time, global warming and its affect on natural disasters, cyber security, and clean energy were incorporated into homeland security priorities.

The challenge we now face, is not one of strategy development but whether Congress will fully fund homeland security efforts, as opposed to slashing the homeland security budget as proposed by the Majority.

Without proper funding, effective implementation of existing strategies is severely compromised.

For example, strategies such as the National Preparedness Goal are in place; but the \$1.4 billion reduction in funding for FEMA-administered grants to States, prevents local first responders from building the capacity to prevent and respond to disasters.

To the Administration’s credit, recently released strategies provide a framework for the United States to confront various emerging threats, regardless of the origin.

The National Security Strategy of 2010, the National Strategy for Counterterrorism of 2011 and the QHSR each contain improvements that more clearly define the homeland security agenda. They establish roles and responsibilities, provide guidance to Federal, State and local entities and the private sector.

Emerging threats such as homegrown terrorism, pandemic outbreaks, natural disasters, cyber security, and chemical weapons have all been addressed.

Yet, without proper funding, the budget will drive the strategy, as opposed to the more appropriate approach of strategy driving budget.

Furthermore, management challenges that hinder the implementation of strategic guidance must also be addressed.

Recent efforts to reduce DHS' reliance on contractors are a step in the right direction, if done appropriately, with minimal to no impact on struggling small and minority business.

When the Department of Homeland Security was stood up, reliance on contractors - while the agency sought to build up its federal workforce was understandable.

However, approximately one-third of the Department's budget continues to be spent on contractors.

These are funds that could be better spent on mission goals and objectives and improving federal employee morale.

The recently released Federal Human Capital Survey revealed that 91.4% of federal worker respondents believed that the work they do is important and 72% believed that DHS accomplishes its mission.

Yet, only 32.3% believed that creativity and innovation are rewarded and only 40%, less than half, believed that they have the resources they need – people, materials and budget – to get their job done.

These are the people who are on the front-line and work every day to secure the homeland,

Yet, earlier this week, with no hearings in the respective Committees, the House Republican Majority passed legislation to extend a freeze on their pay.

In order to effectively implement current strategic guidance, we must put politics aside, put security first and provide the necessary resources to keep our country safe.”

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