

Ranking Member William Keating Opening Statement

Committee on Homeland Security
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigation and Management

Hearing on: “*Department of Homeland Security: An Examination of Ethical Standards*”

9:30 a.m., Thursday, May 17, 2012

There are over 220,000 Department of Homeland Security employees who work every day to secure our homeland from dangerous threats and natural disasters. I would like to thank them for their service.

Unfortunately, there are some among them that use their position of public trust for their own personal gain. In doing so they put the very Nation they were sworn to protect in harm’s way.

Since October 2004, 137 U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) employees have been indicted on or convicted of corruption-related charges – many coming in recent years as the Border Patrol doubled in size.

And during Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011, there were at least 33 incidents of corruption or mission compromising corruption at CBP.

Furthermore the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) Office of Professional Responsibility investigates allegations of misconduct occurring at both CBP and ICE. The number of allegations pursued by that office is staggering.

In 2012 alone, and this is only May, there have been a total of 101 corruption allegations involving ICE employees and 362 from CBP.

At the Transportation and Security Administration, in 2011, there were 3 allegations involving corruption, 33 involving security and intelligence violations, and 210 alleging general misconduct.

Although these allegations have not been proven, they are a testament to the fact that eliminating public corruption at the Department of Homeland Security is in dire need of improvement.

I am therefore pleased that representatives from TSA, CBP and ICE are testifying this morning and look forward to hearing from them regarding steps that are being taken to remedy this situation.

However, ICE, CBP and TSA are not unique in that serious allegations of public trust violations occur Department-wide.

Likewise, DHS is not unique in that each and every Executive Branch agency faces similar challenges and always have.

However, what sets these situations apart is the risk to national security that is inherent in public trust violations on the border and at our Nation’s airports.

I am troubled by allegations of turf battles within the Department and disagreements on who should be in charge.

Recent efforts have been implemented to improve working relations among the DHS OIG and CBP Internal Affairs in addition to CBP Internal Affairs and ICE Office of Professional Responsibility.

I hope that new Memoranda of Understanding will truly cause each agency to understand that delayed investigations as a result of internal disputes will only undermine efforts and perpetuate misconduct.

Again, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and thank them for their participation in today’s hearing.