



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

### *Measuring Outcomes to Understand the State of Border Security*

March 20, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Measuring Outcomes to Understand the State of Border Security”:

“What is the state of border security?” seems like a simple enough question.

But the answer is more complex than it may seem, in part due to differences of opinion on what constitutes ‘border security’ in the first place.

For some of my colleagues, border security means stopping people from crossing the southern border between the ports of entry. It is that, but it is also far more.

It also means securing our northern border, our maritime borders, and our air, sea, and land ports –not just from unauthorized individuals, but also narcotics and other contraband and, most importantly, terrorists.

In an apparent effort to replace ‘operational control’ and apprehensions with a more holistic indicator of conditions at our borders, Customs and Border Protection has been developing a new border metric known as the Border Condition Index.

I support CBP’s efforts to measure security both at and between the ports of entry, as well as the effort to assess quality of life issues along the borders.

Certainly, the Members of this Committee who represent districts along our land borders know firsthand the effects of border security on their communities.

However, I am not sure it is possible to measure progress on these three important but very different border security challenges with just one metric.

Any attempt to distill all of the relevant factors down to one number may end up being worth less than the sum of its parts.

I look forward to hearing today about the status of the BCI and how it would accurately and effectively capture the relevant factors that comprise the state of our borders.

I specifically want to hear about what input the operators – the Border Patrol and the Office of Field Operations, among others – have had in its development.

After all, they are the ones who would be held to whatever standards we set.

That said, I strongly support having a meaningful border security metric or set of metrics with which we can assess progress and hold DHS accountable.

I hope to hear from our witnesses about what the most relevant metrics might be.

Certainly, as we discuss possible comprehensive immigration reform legislation, we continue to hear calls for further enhancements to border security.

I believe there are targeted, cost-effective border security measures that should be part of any final legislative package on immigration reform.

Most importantly, DHS needs a comprehensive border security strategy that includes these metrics, along with appropriate goals and benchmarks.

Today, I look forward to a discussion about how DHS can offer Congress and the American people an accurate assessment of just how secure our Nation's borders are.”

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