



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

***The President's FY 2014 Budget Request for the
Department of Homeland Security***

April 18, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The President’s FY 2014 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”:

“Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere condolences to those who lost loved ones or were injured in Boston. Our thoughts are with them today. As a former volunteer firefighter, I want to commend the Boston police, firefighters, and medical personnel for their heroic response.

Also, I would be remiss if I didn’t also acknowledge the lives lost and destruction we are seeing out of West Texas. Our prayers go out to that community.

As authorizers, we bear a special responsibility to make sure that the government is working to prevent attacks like the one that happened on Monday.

Madame Secretary, your job has certainly not been an easy one. When you arrived at the Department four years ago, it was in bad shape.

There were problems with acquisitions. There were problems with morale. Despite significant investments in preparedness, we had no idea if, as a nation, we were better prepared to respond to a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

To add to that, over the past three years, the Department’s budget has been reduced; meanwhile, the periodic logjams in the Congressional budget process have certainly made future budget planning much more difficult. So, to be clear, I understand that you have a very difficult job.

That said, I am concerned about the lack of progress on many of the fundamental problems that have plagued your agency.

For example, the Department continues to be on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk List” and employee morale continues to be among the lowest of all Federal agencies.

After \$430 million of investment in interoperable communications, Departmental components still are not interoperable.

With respect to the Fiscal Year 2014 budget request, I appreciate your efforts to achieve savings through efficiencies, but I have some serious reservations about some of your proposals.

I am concerned that many of the critical, new investments are dependent upon Congress approving new revenues. In the current congressional environment, that strikes me as a very heavy lift.

Additionally, I have questions about the proposal to allow CBP to accept money from outside stakeholders to defray costs. In particular, I would like to know how this proposal relates to plans to extend the preclearance program to Abu Dhabi, UAE.

With respect to preparedness, I am concerned that the Department has, yet again, proposed to consolidate sixteen targeted homeland security grant programs into a single pot.

It has been over a year since grant consolidation was first proposed, and the Department still has not articulated how the capabilities gained through existing grant programs will be maintained under the new program.

With the limited resources available to the Department, we must ensure that the Federal, State, and local programs are adequately funded.

Before I close, I would note that the Administration has two major initiatives where the Department is expected to play a central role—immigration reform and cybersecurity.

I am interested to hear what resources you need in order to undertake the anticipated advances in these two key areas.”

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>