

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Examining Challenges and Wasted Taxpayer Dollars in Modernizing Border Security IT Systems***

February 6, 2014 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency hearing entitled "Examining Challenges and Wasted Taxpayer Dollars in Modernizing Border Security IT Systems":

"When the Department of Homeland Security was created in 2002, there was a merger of not only agencies and the people employed by those agencies, but also technology and the systems used by legacy agencies to keep our country safe and secure.

One such technology was TECS. As the largest law enforcement tool used throughout the United States, TECS is a vital component to our homeland security efforts.

It is used at the border to ensure that legitimate travelers and trade are welcomed into our country and terrorists, drugs and weapons are prevented from entering the United States. It is also used away from the border by more than twenty federal agencies to create and access terrorist "lookouts," track financial crimes and disseminate intelligence reports.

Unfortunately, given the age of this system and the way that it is structured, it has become outdated, and, in some ways obsolete. Its inefficiency has at times hindered our border security efforts by increasing wait times and producing false positives that create further delay.

Like many legacy systems now in use at DHS, TECS is currently undergoing a modernization effort that by some calculations is expected to cost more than \$1.5 billion. By all accounts, an improved TECS is well overdue; however, the Department's implementation is cause for serious concern.

For example, rather than having one program office, established at the Headquarters level, this major acquisition is being carried out by two separate Components – Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigrations and Customs Enforcement (ICE) – simultaneously.

As a result, we have two separate program offices, two separate program managers, two separate funding streams and the need for a limited acquisition workforce to conduct oversight over two separate major investments.

Under this structure, I am concerned that duplication, redundancy and the inability for one hand to know what the other hand is doing.

Furthermore, both Components continue to face challenges that further reduce my confidence in the management of this billion-dollar-plus acquisition.

CBP continues to be challenged by scheduling delays, and although it insists that the portions of TECS Modernization that have not been delivered will be ready by 2015, the program is still running without a master schedule and a clearly-defined timeline for what will happen when.

ICE has made the disconcerting decision to halt its efforts after operating for years without

established requirements, resulting in testing failures and the expenditure of \$20 million developing a system that was ultimately of no use.

That is \$20 million of scarce homeland security funds that can never be recovered that has simply “gone down the drain.”

These issues and others have caused the Government Accountability Office in a recently released report to state that: “after spending millions of dollars and over four years on TECS modernization, it is unclear when it will be delivered and at what cost.”

Hopefully, today’s witnesses can shed some light on how this effort can be put on a better track and inform this Subcommittee on how much TECS modernization is expected to cost, when it will be delivered, and when Federal, State and local law enforcement officials can stop relying on a 30-year old, obsolete system while our security hangs in the balance.”

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