

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Preventing Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Mismanagement in
Homeland Security – A GAO High-Risk List Review***

May 7, 2014 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Preventing Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Mismanagement in Homeland Security – A GAO High-Risk List Review”:

“Today’s hearing is to examine the Department of Homeland Security’s management functions deemed high-risk by the Government Accountability Office and the steps that the Department is taking to improve in these areas.

At the beginning of each Congress, the GAO releases its “High Risk Update” which focuses on agencies and programs that are vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse. Understandably, when the Department was formed in 2003, it was placed on the “high risk list” because of the challenges associated with transforming twenty- two legacy agencies into one new Federal Department. It was also put on the “high risk list” because its failure to effectively do so could present national security risks.

Unfortunately, more than a decade after its inception, the Department remains on the “high risk list.” One reason is that the Department has struggled to integrate its management functions across all the Components. These integration challenges present diverse operational and management problems at the Department at all levels.

There has been general acceptance of the “One DHS” concept advanced by the last Secretary of Homeland Security but what is needed at this pivotal moment is a leader who will animate that slogan and put structures and procedures in place to fully integrate the department. Secretary Johnson may well be that leader but any reforms will be at the mercy of an entrenched and unhappy workforce and the clock. I look forward to working with Deputy Secretary Mayorkas and Secretary Johnson to bring about needed reforms.

For the first time since its inception, the Department received its first clean audit on all its financial statements for Fiscal Year 2013. As commendable as this may be, we must not overlook that the independent auditor did find continued weakness in the Department’s financial controls.

Another challenging area for the Department is IT acquisitions and management. Over the years, the Department has had varying success acquiring and implementing information technology systems; some systems have performed as promised while others have failed to deliver capabilities and mission benefits. There is a need for the Department to strengthen its internal IT governance. GAO has noted that the Department has more work to do to fully address its IT management challenges such as finalizing policies and procedures associated with its new governance structure.

Finally, the Department spends approximately a quarter of its annual budget procuring goods and services in support of its homeland security missions. Yet, since its inception, managing acquisitions has been a significant challenge for the Department.

The management framework put in place by the Obama Administration has the potential for

improving DHS acquisitions management in significant ways. That is why I am pleased that this Committee was able to come together in a bipartisan fashion last week and passed H.R. 4228, the "DHS Acquisition Accountability and Efficiency Act," which seeks to codify what has been deemed by the Comptroller General and other watchdogs as successful and seeks to close other gaps that exist.

I look forward to more ways that this Committee can work to help advance the Department and help it achieve the goals of being fully integrated, with clean financial audits, and internal management and oversight controls in its information technology and acquisitions departments.

Given the pivotal role the Department has in protecting and preparing America, management challenges become a distraction and have grave consequences for our national security. Hence, it is my hope that the Department can continue to progress and we can see a day when it is not a part of the GAO High Risk list."

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