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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

Stakeholder Perspectives on Priorities for the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review

June 20, 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 “Stakeholder Perspectives on Priorities for the Quadrennial Homeland Security Review”:

“Pursuant to the Implementing the Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007, every four years, the Department of Homeland Security (Department) must outline its long-term strategy and priorities for homeland security in the form of a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, or QHSR, which was to be submitted to Congress in December 2009, and every four years thereafter.

This is a model that has proven to be helpful for the Department of Defense and it was anticipated that the Department, and the Nation as a whole, would equally benefit from the Department of Homeland Security’s effort.

The first QHSR was not timely received and did not satisfy the requirements set forth in the statute defining what it must contain. It did, however, serve as a framework for the second QHSR, which should have been submitted to Congress by December 31, 2013.

Unfortunately, once again, the report was late. The first QHSR was submitted almost two months past the statutory deadline; this latest version is almost six months overdue.

I appreciate the need for the Department to align the QHSR with the President’s Budget Request, which is released in March and that the transition in Departmental leadership also impacted the timeline, but, the Department must do better.

Moreover, one of the fundamental purposes of the QHSR is to inform the budget and as a result the budget should align with the priorities set forth in the document. Building on this foundation as well, are the programs and policies that are implemented, which should also align with the strategies laid out in the QHSR.

For example, although I appreciate the Department’s emphasis on improving our biosurveillance capabilities, it is unclear whether and how its strategy will align with Federal efforts coordinated by the White House.

The Administration released the National Strategy for Biosurveillance in July 2012, and an implementation plan was due 120 days later. To date, the implementation plan has not been released, and the Department has not been able to tell the Committee when the implementation plan will be released or what its role will be.

Accordingly, I will be interested in learning more about the degree to which portions of the QHSR related to biosurveillance were written in coordination with the implementation plan for the National Strategy for Biosurveillance and whether and how the Department’s role will change when that document is ultimately released.

Likewise, there is an entire section devoted to immigration. Yet, unless and until we pass

Comprehensive Immigration Reform, our system will remain broken. I look forward to monitoring how the Department's will carry out these and other priorities set forth in the document.

Furthermore, the QHSR process does not and should exist in a vacuum. The homeland security enterprise consists of Federal, State, local and tribal partners, in addition to the private sector.

I therefore look forward to hearing from the stakeholders present at today's hearing to ascertain how those outside of Government were included in the process and to obtain their perspective on what the Department has identified as our Nation's priorities over the next four years."

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