

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Unmanned Aerial Systems Threats: Exploring Security Implications and Mitigation Technologies***

March 18, 2015 (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 “Unmanned Aerial Systems Threats: Exploring Security Implications and Mitigation Technologies”:

“On a daily basis, articles are published about the suspicious use of commercially available drones. In recent weeks, drones have been observed flying over sensitive locations in Paris. According to French authorities, drones have flown over nuclear installations, the home of the French President, and near the United States embassy.

Here in the United States, a drone recently crashed on the White House grounds. While the incident at the White House has been described by officials as nothing more than a drunken misadventure, it raised questions about the threat commercially available drones may pose to individuals, infrastructure and our aviation system.

Undoubtedly, drones have great potential. In Japan, drones have been used by farmers for years as an efficient and effective tool for crop fertilization. Projections for commercial use in the United States display that drones will become a common sight on farms from Pennsylvania to Mississippi in the coming years.

In the wrong hands, these potentially valuable commercial tools could become dangerous instruments for attack. That is why it is critical that the Department of Homeland Security conduct risk assessments to determine what steps should be taken to mitigate the potential threat.

To date, we have learned of components of the Department, such as the Secret Service and Science and Technology Directorate, conducting testing to identify methods to address the potential threat drones pose. It is less clear whether there is a Department wide strategy being developed to address the issue.

Unfortunately, despite being invited to testify, the Department of Homeland Security is not here today to explain to Members what is being done to address the security vulnerability drones expose. Despite the Department’s absence, I am confident that the Members will receive valuable testimony from the distinguished panel of witnesses assembled.

Professor McNeal is an expert on the issue of drones and will add a valuable voice to our conversation about what policy solutions should be explored to address the security concerns surrounding drones.

Professor Humphries is making his second appearance before the Subcommittee to discuss this issue. I look forward to hearing from him regarding the progress DHS has made regarding drones since his appearance in 2012.

I also look forward to hearing from Mr. Roggero regarding potential technological solutions to the threat posed by drones.

Finally, I am please that Chief Beary is appearing in his capacity as President of the International Association of Chiefs of Police. We all have questions Chief Beary can address regarding how law enforcement utilizes drones and how they respond to drones operating in our cities.

Before yielding back Mr. Chairman, I am compelled to point out that much of what we, and now the public, knows about the Secret Service's testing of drones is the result of leaks. Unfortunately, it is an all too common occurrence for information provided to Members and staff in our secure space to be published by the media in the days and hours after briefings.

This Committee has a responsibility to the American people to make the Department of Homeland Security work and accordingly our nation more secure.

Leaking classified information is in direct conflict with that responsibility. It is also in conflict with the law and oath we signed to obtain access to classified information. I hope, and trust, all Members and staff of this Committee, and those on other Committees we invite to attend briefings, will take the oath and the responsibility that comes with it to heart."

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