

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Examining DHS Science and Technology Directorate's Engagement with Academia and Industry***

May 19, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “Examining DHS Science and Technology Directorate’s Engagement with Academia and Industry”:

“Many of my concerns about the Science and Technology Directorate stem from our work in the Committee a few years ago during my Chairmanship, when we all worked together over a period of two years to pass a comprehensive, bipartisan Science and Technology authorization bill. That bill sought to provide much-needed direction for the research and development efforts of the Department.

Within S&T, conducting R&D on technologies is a key component of DHS’s efforts to detect, prevent, and mitigate terrorist threats. Many components of DHS conduct different types of R&D for their respective missions, but GAO tells us that DHS does not have a unified department-wide policy defining R&D, or guidance directing components to report R&D activities and investments.

We have had questions over the years on how we can determine the Department’s total investment in R&D across all the components, and how S&T can effectively oversee components’ R&D efforts to align them with agency-wide R&D goals and priorities. If we are going to authorize S&T this year, we should establish policies and guidance for defining R&D across the department, and having clear processes and procedures for overseeing R&D, that would provide more oversight of R&D investments across the board.

Though I have met with Under Secretary Brothers, it is still unclear to me whether there is a system to monitor research milestones and collect feedback from customers and end-users on the effectiveness of the services delivered by the Directorate. These milestones and feedback would allow this Committee to offer an objective assessment of the successes and failures of the agency. Without objective measurement tools, it is impossible for Congress to assess what should be changed or what should be kept.

Today, we are going to hear from industry associations and academia on how they interact with the research and development efforts of the Directorate. I hope to hear some suggestions on how those relationships - among the Directorate, industry, and academia - can be improved, particularly in the Small Business Innovation Research program, or SBIR.

Finally, I believe we are at a crossroads because in this budget atmosphere of sequestered funding, the Directorate will be challenged to prioritize or eliminate programs that help protect the American people today. In 2012, just a few years ago, the House passed extreme budget cuts to the FY12 S&T funding levels with the support of many of my Republican colleagues – and they were harsh by any standard.

There are some who are predicting that we are on the way to more cuts, similar to the FY12 sequester. Officials with cybersecurity responsibilities have seen large increases in their budgets, but Research and Development in the S&T budget could be an easy target for offsets, as we have seen before. These potential cuts will have consequences, because if you have less money for science and technology, you can only do less scientific and technological research.

I caution that the S&T Directorate should be prepared for such a possibility in today’s budget atmosphere. Mr. Chairman, I hope the Committee will take these matters seriously as we learn how the directorate interacts with industry and Academia, and its operational programs going forward.

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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>