COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

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Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Worldwide Threats to the Homeland: 25 Years After 9/11

November 18, 2026

So much has changed since 9/11 and the Department of Homeland Security was established to prevent another large-scale terrorist attack on American soil.

Unfortunately, under President Trump, administration officials have weaponized DHS to carry out the President's extreme political agenda and used their official positions to enrich themselves and their friends. In doing so, they have taken DHS away from its original mission and made our country less safe.

For many years, these worldwide threats hearings provided Congress and the public with an opportunity to hear directly from the Secretary of Homeland Security, FBI Director, and National Counterterrorism Center Director about the threats facing our Nation. However, only one of those witnesses is here today.

I am glad Secretary Mullin is here because we have many questions for him about how the President has turned the Department against the American people and used it as his personal political cudgel. I also want to ask the Secretary about the Department's failure to respond to Democrats' oversight inquiries. Dozens of our oversight letters have gone unanswered despite our legitimate legislative need for this information.

After the recent election, Secretary Mullin reached out to me for the first time since his confirmation nearly eight months ago. While I appreciate your very belated gesture, Mr. Secretary, what I need you to do is answer your mail. I hope you will commit today to providing the information and documents we requested without further delay.

Our oversight is critical because even 25 years after 9/11, threats to the homeland persist. Over the past week alone, we have seen a major outage at Microsoft, an FAA outage that resulted in a nationwide ground stop, and outages at major banks.

Whatever the cause, Americans are looking to the administration for answers and assurances that the critical infrastructure they rely on every day is safe. They haven't gotten it. Instead, the President responded to the ground stop saying, "I don't take any responsibility."

Secretary Mullin, you went on TV to make statements and offer hunches based not on evidence or formal reviews, but on conversations you've had with people you refuse to name. Speaking about the administration's handling of the situation, you said, and I quote, "This is what the leadership of President Trump looks like." On that we agree, Mr. Secretary. The so-called "leadership" of the Trump administration consists of refusing to take responsibility, shifting blame to others, and putting your own interests above the country.

While Americans were stranded in airports across the country, with many sleeping on the floor at their gates, the Secretary boarded a luxury jet, flew to a college football game, and visited the private suite of

a company that DHS had awarded a $2.2 BILLION contract. For the Secretary of Homeland Security to do that during a crisis was not only irresponsible, Mr. Secretary, but also incredibly tone deaf.

Meanwhile, President Trump's reckless war of choice with Iran has been escalating. Reports of Iran developing plans to detonate a dirty bomb in the Nation's capital are alarming, and the public needs to be able to trust that their government is focused on keeping them safe instead of living large on the taxpayers' dime.

These are serious issues and the American people deserve to have serious people solve them. Frankly, I do not believe that person is you, Mr. Secretary. But in just a few short months, the Committee is going to make sure you do the job you've been hired to do. If not, you need to go the way of your predecessor.

But at least you showed up, which is more than I can say for FBI Director Kash Patel, who has again declined to testify at this hearing. For over a decade, FBI Directors under administrations of both parties appeared before this committee to give their assessment of threats to the homeland.

While I appreciate that the Director of National Intelligence was added to the panel late yesterday, Director Patel's absence for a second consecutive year limits the Committee's ability to conduct effective oversight at this hearing.

Director Patel is shirking his responsibility to appear before this Committee, just as he has shirked his responsibilities leading the Nation's premier Federal law enforcement agency—allegedly drinking so much that he has been unavailable or difficult for his staff to wake even during high-profile terrorist incidents and investigations.

Mr. Chairman, you should take it as an affront that the Director finds time to spend taxpayer dollars flying to his girlfriend's concerts, go "VIP snorkeling" at a Pearl Harbor memorial site, celebrate with hockey teams, and intimidate journalists for reporting he doesn't like—but has no time to testify before this Committee.

He also hasn't answered our oversight letters. Committee Democrats have sent 6 letters to the Director over the last year-and-a-half with no substantive replies. Those letters include questions about the scaling back of FBI counterintelligence activities and investigations into government corruption and domestic terrorism.

Also, nearly a year ago, we requested a briefing from FBI and DOJ on their implementation of President Trump's National Security Presidential Memorandum-7: Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence. This memorandum drastically redefines what domestic terrorism is in order to justify the Trump administration's efforts to stifle dissent and investigate anyone—or any group—they don't like.

In July, at a classified briefing, an FBI counterterrorism official told Members that they would be briefing the Committee, quote, "soon." My staff has followed up on more than a dozen occasions, and last month I sent a letter to Attorney General Todd Blanche and Director Patel demanding the promised briefing. Still, not a peep from either agency in response.

If there is nothing illegal or improper about what the agencies are doing, then there should be no problem being forthcoming with the Committee and the public. Their silence speaks volumes, but it's no surprise.

The Trump administration's agenda for the last two years has been: Weaponize the government. Politicize DHS. Shift the blame. Line their own pockets. Ignore oversight.

Congressional Republicans have let this outrageous behavior go on unchecked, but the administration's free pass is about to come to an end.

Earlier this month, the American people overwhelmingly voted for accountability. For an end to the Trump administration's chaos, violence, and vitriol. For a government that works for the American people rather than the special interests. For Congress to use its authorities to conduct oversight of an administration that has rejected the rule of law.

Come January, that is what Democrats intend to deliver for our constituents and for the country — accountability. Mr. Secretary, we look forward to receiving the responses you owe this Committee so that we can do our legislative work and to having you before us early next year.

Accountability is coming.

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Media contact