



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***A Dangerous and Sophisticated Adversary: Are the New Border Security Task Forces the Right Approach?***

**Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security**

**April 4, 2017**

The establishment and authorization of the Department of Homeland Security's Joint Task Forces was a major priority for former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson. Secretary Johnson was in a position to observe firsthand many of the coordination challenges that continue to face the Department of Homeland Security, almost 15 years after its establishment.

Those of us who have conducted oversight of the Department since it was created from 22 different Federal departments and agencies also understand the effects of that legacy, which persist today.

Drawing on the example of the Department of Defense, and launched as part of a Unity of Effort campaign, the Joint Task Forces are meant to set the conditions for the Department to act in a more unified fashion.

Coordination of the border security activities of the Department in particular is critical, given the number of DHS components that play a role in the mission, including the Coast Guard, Customs and Border Protection, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has closely examined issues regarding coordination among Department components and programs over the years. We are grateful to have Ms. Gambler from GAO with us today to testify about her work on border security issues and DHS coordination and share her thoughts about whether and how the Joint Task Forces can be successful.

I also want to note that the discussion about facilitating border security coordination and cooperation is moot if these agencies are not properly resourced by the Trump Administration.

Hiring 15,000 Border Patrol agents and ICE agents and officers while ignoring critical CBP staffing shortages at ports of entry does not enhance our Nation's border

security.

Securing the areas of the border between the ports of entry while leaving the proverbial front door to the country thousands of officers short creates glaring security vulnerability.

Similarly, slashing the Coast Guard's already lean budget makes no sense from a security perspective. Enhancing security on the land borders but crippling the Coast Guard's ability to patrol our coasts would undermine border security, as drug traffickers will surely shift their operations to the path of least resistance.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about the resources they need to fulfill their border security mission, and how the Joint Task Forces can be an important part of that effort.

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