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

Deter, Detect and Interdict: Technology's Role in Securing the Border

Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security

July 25, 2017

Today's hearing on border security technology is a topic that has been revisited and examined many times during my tenure as both Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security. Indeed, this Committee has conducted vigorous oversight of DHS's attempts to deploy security technology along our Nation's borders over the years – and with good reason.

Beginning with the Integrated Surveillance Intelligence System, later the America's Shield Initiative (ASI), and then SBlnet, DHS has consistently over-promised and under-delivered border security technology. For example, when DHS canceled SBlnet, the program had been deployed to only 53 miles of border in Arizona at a cost of about \$1 BILLION, and today is generally no longer in use.

This Committee has been fortunate to have the Government Accountability Office (GAO) engaged on each of these major procurements, as well as on evaluating the other ways CBP uses border surveillance technology, which contributes significantly to our oversight efforts. That work continues today, with an ongoing engagement examining DHS' most recent border security technology deployment activities.

Today, I want to have a frank discussion about CBP's major border security technology assets, including Mobile Surveillance Capabilities (MSCs), aerostats, and Predator Bs. Since our witnesses are going to discuss how these technologies are used to enhance our border security, I would like to hear precisely how the effectiveness of these tools are measured.

As I have all throughout my tenure on this Committee, I support using technology as a force-multiplier along our Nation's borders. In fact, this technology promises to be a more useful, adaptive, and robust solution to our border security concerns than the President's proposed multi-billion border wall boondoggle.

However, if there is anything our oversight of DHS's efforts have shown, border security technology must be procured, deployed, and utilized in an appropriate, cost-effective manner. Otherwise, CBP could be left with yet another border security technology system that fails to deliver as promised.

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