



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***Innovations in Security: Examining the Use of Canines***

**Subcommittee on Transportation & Protective Security**

**October 3, 2017**

Before I begin, I would like to take a moment to speak about the terrible act of violence committed in Las Vegas on Sunday night.

This was a despicable act, our thoughts and prayers go out to the victims and their families, and I thank the first responders for their heroism.

Unfortunately, this mass shooting is the latest in a long line of deadly attacks perpetrated by a lone individual armed to the teeth.

As someone who gets great personal fulfillment from hunting, I say it is long past time for Congress to pass common-sense reforms.

I call on my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to act on this issue before we find ourselves in the same place yet again, providing condolences after another mass shooting.

With that said, attacks like this highlight the need for improvements to security on multiple fronts.

Canines have become a critical component of U.S. security efforts.

There is evidence that when trained, canines can provide a unique layer of security, unmatched by any other animal or machine.

The Committee on Homeland Security, which conducts oversight of the Department of Homeland Security, has actively engaged with DHS about its canine programs for many years.

Time and time again, we have heard DHS stress the importance of canines.

With every terrorist plot that unfolds, we are reminded that as the threats grow, we must continue to advance our security systems.

The recent London Tube bombing is proof of the persistent threat to surface transportation systems.

Our nation's surface transportation systems, which include subway stations, bus terminals, and passenger rail hubs, are at risk.

Yet, Federal investment in frontline surface transportation security is largely limited to sending Visible Intermodal Prevention and Response or "Viper" teams to conduct sweeps and operations.

President Trump's Fiscal Year 2018 budget proposed nearly eliminating this program that has been instrumental in working with stakeholders to secure surface transportation.

VIPR teams sometimes integrate canine resources, but how else can TSA incorporate canines to secure surface transportation?

For that matter, can the Federal government partner more effectively with the canine detection industry to bolster explosive detection capabilities?

Are there additional benefits to canine operations that the Federal government is not currently utilizing?

These are just some of the questions I hope the expert witnesses for today's hearing will be able to address.

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