



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“Organizational and Policy Proposals for the FY 2008 Department of Homeland Security Authorization: Positioning US-VISIT for Success and Establishing a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Process”**

March 20, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Organizational and Policy Proposals for the FY 2008 Department of Homeland Security Authorization: Positioning US-VISIT for Success and Establishing a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review Process”:

“For over ten years, Congress has called for the development and implementation of an “entry-exit system” to ensure that we know who is entering and leaving the country. I have watched with great interest the Department’s efforts to implement US-VISIT.

While I applaud the Department for its efforts, there is still a long way to go. The exit piece of the system seems no closer to being implemented than when it was first authorized over ten years ago. We have a vested interest in seeing US-VISIT succeed. That is why we have a lot of questions about the recent decision to move US-VISIT to the National Protection and Programs Directorate.

The skeptic in me wants to say that instead of fixing what’s wrong with the program, the Department is redefining it and moving it around. We have seen this before.

It falls to Mr. Moczny and Mr. Zitz to convince us that this move will bring about the results that Congress has been seeking. I am inclined to believe that the right place for US-VISIT may be at Customs and Border Protection-- the agency that actually does screening at the border. After all, SBInet and the Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative are both located within CBP. I am concerned that this move will create new stovepipes between CBP and US-VISIT. Our security can not wait for problems to make their way up the chain of command.

Additionally, we will be looking today at how to ensure that a clear and coherent strategy are behind US-VISIT as well as the Department’s other vital programs. One of the ways to do this is to provide a way for the Department to better organize its strategic planning. Congress has mandated that the Department of Defense undertake Quadrennial Reviews. We are here today to see if a similar process will work for the Department. A clear vision for the Department and a strong US-VISIT program are key issues that will likely be considered in the authorization bill that the Committee expects to take up next week.”

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