



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“The Resilient Homeland - Broadening the Homeland Security Strategy”

May 5, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled ‘The Resilient Homeland - Broadening the Homeland Security Strategy’:

“As the world becomes increasingly more ‘flat’ a primary distinction between a competitive Nation and those nations left behind will be a nation’s resilience. Resilience is commonly defined as the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

As it relates to the Department and its functions, resilience is a practice which will allow a quick return to effective (if not 100% normal) operations, in the wake of an attack or disaster.

Today, we will hear from key partners on the issue—the private sector, one of the country’s busiest airports, and a leading expert on resilience.

Our Nation’s success is in the hands of all critical partners and we all have a role to play. Of the Nation’s critical infrastructure, 85% is owned or operated by the private sector; the business community must have cutting-edge technology in order to effectively ‘bounce back’.

Colleges and universities must provide sound research on the latest technologies and develop curricula to train the next generation of homeland security experts.

Under my leadership, the Committee has taken steps to further the resilience of our Nation’s critical infrastructure. Understanding that we all have a role to play, this Committee has taken the lead on making the necessary legislative changes.

Earlier this year, the Committee adopted and reported out the ‘Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2008,’ which included the promotion of inherently safer technology (IST) to lower the possible consequences of an attack or accident at a facility.

Last year, H.R. 1 was signed into law and included a title that promotes the Private Sector Preparedness Voluntary Certification Program which encourages stakeholders to adopt standards that ensure effective continuity.

And just last week, the Subcommittee on Emergency Communication, Preparedness, and Response marked up H.R. 5890, the Citizen and Community Preparedness Act of 2008 – a bill that supports citizen preparedness, which is a cornerstone of a resilient homeland.

On the other hand, since 9/11 this Administration has focused solely on preventing the next attack as opposed to how best to recover should an incident occur.

That, of course, is not the best approach. We must ensure that the Department is properly communicating, collaborating, and coordinating with key stakeholders and critical partners to make sure that we, as a Nation, are prepared for what to do after an attack.

Resilience offers an effective metric: time.

We know that companies can measure how long they will be 'down' in the wake of a particular disaster and can work to minimize that time. So it makes sense that the ability to measure 'down time' makes resilience a good security policy.

Simply put, the longer our economic sector is 'down', the more the terrorists will brag that they are successful. I know that resilience is not universally applicable, but where it's relevant the Department must promote resilience.

In closing, promoting resilience requires honesty with the American people. It is through that honesty that we can provide this Nation's citizens with freedom from fear. It also ensures the involvement of critical stakeholders in keeping America strong."

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