

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Project 28: Lessons Learned and the Future of SBInet”

February 27, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the joint hearing with the Subcommittee on Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism and the Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight entitled “Project 28: Lessons Learned and the Future of SBInet”:

“February 2nd was a few weeks ago, but from where I sit today is the real Groundhog Day.

We are talking about a border technology project that failed to live up to its billing. The Department is here to tell us that they’ve learned from their mistakes, and that everything is great going forward.

Border Patrol is going to tell us that they need technology that actually works in order to help them perform their crucial mission. And GAO is here giving us the “ground truth” about systems that don’t work the way they were supposed to. The letters have changed from ISIS and ASI to SBInet, but the narrative is the same.

I’ve spoken recently about how we need to chart a course for the American people towards freedom from fear. But the course you’re on keeps reversing back on itself.

This cannot go on. I understand that Boeing is already at work on a \$64 million task order that is supposed to cure what ails Project 28. You have to convince me why we should trust you this time.

You have to convince me why this time is different. And you should be forewarned: your task today is a difficult one, because you carry with you the baggage of the failed border technology projects of the past.

Frankly, I’ve already penciled in the next one of these hearings for about 6 months from now. Hopefully some of things you say today – and more importantly, the things you do in the coming months – will cause me to go back and erase that calendar entry. But I have to say that I think it’s more likely that instead of erasing it, I’ll be writing it in ink.

I have said this many times before, but it is important so I will say it again: we need to secure our borders, and to do this we need technology to assist our hard-working Border Patrol agents. Gentleman, I cannot be more clear: If you can’t get it right, we will look elsewhere for people who can. “

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