

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****“The Future of Border Security: Can SBInet Succeed?”**

October 24, 2007 (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 “The Future of Border Security: Can SBInet Succeed?”:

“June 13, 2007, was supposed to be an auspicious date for the SBInet program and for the Department of Homeland Security as a whole. On that date, Project 28 was scheduled to be operational.

Less than a week prior, on June 7, 2007, this Committee heard testimony from Department and Boeing representatives regarding the status of Project 28. No mention was made of potential delays. No one disclosed any significant problems that could postpone Project 28 for many months. And yet here we sit, four-and-a-half months later, and the project is still not operational. I am extremely dismayed, to put it mildly.

SBInet is not a new concept – it is the Department’s third border security technology program. Many had hoped that Project 28 would finally offer an effective technology solution to better secure our borders, unlike SBInet’s failed predecessors. Were told that this time around the outcome would be very different, partly because the Department has learned valuable lessons from prior mistakes.

We were also told that Boeing’s solution would use proven, off-the-shelf technologies that would help mitigate risks and avoid the technical problems that plagued previous initiatives. Finally, we were told that these technologies would be integrated to give Border Patrol agents the real-time situational awareness they need to take control of this 28-mile stretch of Arizona border.

None of those commitments have been fulfilled. Technological problems remain, and Project 28 is not an operational tool to help Border Patrol secure the border.

I have a growing sense of déjà vu. We have been here before, and we have held this hearing before. The Department cannot continue to do the same thing over and over again and expect a different result. We cannot continue to throw good taxpayer money after bad. Today I need the Department and Boeing to tell me how they will turn Project 28 around.

The Department owes the dedicated men and women of the Border Patrol an operational tool that will help them fulfill their mission.

Most importantly, we owe the American people security and accountability. I can assure you that the Committee will do its part by continuing to conduct vigorous oversight over Project 28 and the SBInet program in the coming months and beyond.”

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