

News from

Congressman Christopher Carney

Representing Northeast and Central Pennsylvania

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CARNEY STATEMENT FOR HOMELAND SECURITY HEARING

Washington, D.C.--Congressman Christopher P. Carney, Chairman of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Management, Investigations and Oversight, issued the following opening statement for the Subcommittee hearing, "The Quadrennial Homeland Security Review":

"We're here today to examine efforts at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to complete a Quadrennial Homeland Security Review, or QHSR, by December 2009.

"People up here on the Hill and downtown in the think tanks have been discussing the need for a QHSR since shortly after the genesis of the Department. The idea is modeled on the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) conducted across the river by our friends in that squat, five-sided building.

"The Department of Defense (DoD), like DHS, is a sprawling department made up of countless smaller components that, in an ideal world, collaborate to accomplish a set of common missions. Due to the dynamic nature of the world, DoD decided that it would self-evaluate every four years to determine if it was headed in the right direction and, if not, what course corrections were required.

"I had the opportunity last week to sit down with Deputy Assistant Secretary Cohn, the DHS official tasked with the QHSR project.

"We had a very frank conversation and after he left, I felt very confident that he's more than capable of not only completing the QHSR, but probably exceeding Congressional expectations. I understand Mr. Cohn also had a meeting with Committee staff who were left with a similar impression.

"I guess that if I'm worried about anything, it's that we're about 16 or 17 months from the due date for this fairly comprehensive evaluation and that timespan is not only going to be punctuated by an administration transition, but also by the ongoing deadlock in the 'normal' appropriations process.

"One of the constant themes that I think this subcommittee has mentioned in just about all of our hearings is the lack of a common culture at DHS.

“While DoD still has its disparate components, the organization within it devoted to the QDR is massive and starts working on the next report as soon as it releases the latest and greatest version.

“DHS isn’t quite there yet with the QHSR and we can’t really expect it to be. This first effort is really an opportunity to align member agencies and personnel with a set of core missions, not to mention working with HHS, DoD and other cabinet level agencies that DHS will have to collaborate with on pieces of the QHSR.

“This subcommittee is all too familiar with the lack of a common culture at DHS. We’ve heard the stories that if DHS was a corporation, it would take seven years from the time of the merger of the 22 agencies until there was a DHS “culture.” And we’ve also heard that this process is actually going to take longer at the Department.

“The good news is that even before the QHSR was mandated by law, DHS was requesting funding to complete a QHSR, which I see as a willingness to reflect on accomplishments, missions and, hopefully, shortcomings. The shortcomings are obviously the areas where we’ll hopefully see the greatest improvement.

“We know things at headquarters will be in tumult come November, December, January and a few months beyond, but I think we’re all cautiously optimistic that the QHSR process will carry on without much interruption through the transition.

“That said, Ms. Wormuth raises some interesting questions in her testimony as to whether all of the transitional activity in collaborative agencies, like HHS, DoD and others, will hinder the QHSR process. I’m sure the subcommittee will be interested in learning more from both witnesses regarding the potential for unintentional static in trying to complete the QHSR.

“From my conversation with Deputy Assistant Secretary Cohn, it sounds like he would like to have as much empirical data in place prior to the transition. That would ensure that when a new administration arrives, the bulk of the remaining QHSR work will be analyzing the data and extrapolating from it the common goals and missions of the Department, the areas for improvement, and the areas where DHS agencies, personnel and assets are working as envisioned.

“No matter which candidate wins in November, I’m sure we’ll see differing views on the subject of homeland security than those of the current administration.

“It’s important that the new administration has an opportunity to play an active role in crafting the QHSR rather than just being left something totally crafted by the current administration.

“And while we’re talking about the end of the year, I’d be remiss if I didn’t mention the issue of appropriations for the QHSR. Some funds were used in FY08 with the idea being that

dedicated appropriations would be allocated for FY09 and FY10 to ensure adequate resources and staff to complete the review.

“There’s a good chance the government will be operating on a continuing resolution for some of FY09 based upon FY08 funding. We need to ensure that funds are reprogrammed at DHS for the QHSR to be completed and delivered on time.

“I’m sure this is only the beginning of our oversight of the QHSR process – Mr. Cohn, I’m sure that Committee staff will be in close contact with you and your office as work progresses on the QHSR.

“I look forward to our witnesses’ testimony today and appreciate their participation.”

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