

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****“The Challenge of Aligning Programs, Personnel, and Resources to Achieve Border Security”**

July 16, 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 Challenge of Aligning Programs, Personnel, and Resources to Achieve Border Security”:

“As a Nation, we have made significant strides toward securing America's borders since the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Congress has provided unprecedented funding to DHS for border security and immigration enforcement, including \$14.8 billion in the last fiscal year alone.

The Department has responded by moving forward on new programs, hiring additional personnel, and acquiring more equipment than ever before. And yet, DHS has failed to develop a comprehensive strategy to guide its border security activities.

Earlier this Congress, I issued a document entitled “Border Security Principles” that outlines how border security can be done right. Number one on that list is the development and implementation of a comprehensive border security strategy.

I have long said that without a comprehensive strategy to coordinate the Department's efforts across components, DHS will not be as effective as it should be. Money and manpower will only get you so far. In the absence of a strategy, discord and competition for resources within DHS is all but guaranteed.

For instance, at the same time DHS is investing tens of millions of dollars to try and secure the border “between the ports of entry,” the ports of entry themselves are being neglected. Their condition is often so poor that they are out-dated and ill-equipped to handle the challenges of the 21st century.

Similarly, while DHS has expanded the Border Patrol's ranks at an unprecedented rate, our ports of entry are understaffed by “several thousand” officers. I have been to ports of entry on both the Northern and Southern borders and have seen these problems firsthand.

Ad hoc border policy must stop. We need a comprehensive border security strategy that considers all aspects of our borders.

Mr. Secretary, we appreciate that you are in a race against the clock. Many of the programs you have proposed and have been mandated by Congress simply cannot be completed on your watch. It will fall to your successor to finish the job.

As you can see, transition and its implications for the management of border programs is a major concern for this Committee. We have been reviewing the transition documents you provided and will continue to monitor this issue closely. The American people deserve a secure America. “

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