



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2007

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

It is my understanding that the Department is in the final stages of determining whether to accept formally *SBI^{net}*'s Project 28 and to commit the United States to paying the full contract amount of \$20 million. I urge you to defer acceptance until you are certain that Project 28 performs as it was originally billed, *i.e.*, an operational tool that will help the Border Patrol secure our nation's borders.

I am concerned that, in Project 28's current state, this will not be the case. We have received recent reports from the field that strongly suggest that the "final" Project 28 product will provide the Border Patrol little, if any, functionality it did not already possess. Before the government accepts Project 28, Congress needs to be assured that the well-publicized technological problems plaguing the system have been fully addressed. Neither the Committee's last visit to the Tucson, Arizona area, nor the October 24, 2007, joint subcommittee hearing resolved our concerns. Indeed, they only raised new questions.

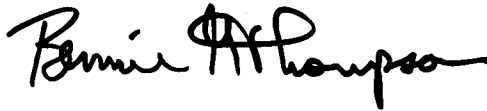
Around the time of the aforementioned October hearing, we began to hear suggestions that Project 28 was just a "demonstration project" or a "test bed" for future technologies. These representations are inconsistent with the claims that were made about Project 28 at its inception. CBP has continually and repeatedly described Project 28 as "the first operational task order awarded" under *SBI^{net}*. Boeing representatives have stated that it would "arm [the Border Patrol] with data information they never really had before." If these expectations are not likely to be met, Congress must be alerted immediately. Moreover, as stewards of the American tax dollar, we need a complete and unvarnished explanation of what has gone awry before this system is accepted.

If, as it now appears, the technological problems encountered are such that Project 28 has become more of a technology "test bed" than a new operational tool for the Border Patrol, the Department needs to address this directly. Frankly, I am as disturbed about this apparent lack of candor and the attempt to "spin" Project 28's troubles as I am by the

technical difficulties you have encountered with the initiative. Technological problems can be fixed. Credibility, once lost, is unlikely ever to be regained.

To be clear, I strongly support the use of technology to secure our border. I do not, however, support accepting a deliverable that does not provide the Border Patrol with the promised improvements in operational capability. Again, I urge you to defer accepting Project 28 until you can provide this Committee and the American people with an assurance that it does so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "B".

Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman

Cc: Honorable Peter T. King, Ranking Member