



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515
October 30, 2007

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

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

My staff was recently briefed on the Department of Homeland Security Traveler Redress Inquiry Program (DHS TRIP) by DHS staff. DHS TRIP was established to serve as a "one-stop" redress system for travelers who have been denied entry, refused boarding for transportation, or identified for additional screening by DHS components at airports, seaports, train stations and land borders that resulted in the traveler being delayed or inconvenienced. While we think DHS TRIP is a step in the right direction, we are concerned that the current structure results in delayed adjudications as well as duplicative efforts. An upcoming Committee hearing scheduled for November 8, 2007 will examine these issues, and as such, I hope DHS will act expeditiously in responding to my concerns before this hearing so this and other issues can be discussed.

I understand that since February 2007, DHS TRIP has had approximately 14,400 requests for redress filed, and that number likely has increased. However, the system was inoperable for nearly two months, and therefore DHS has been unable to determine how many applications have been processed, how many are outstanding, and what type of backlog currently exists. Additionally, under the current system, information voluntarily submitted by individuals who were misidentified is not being shared among the various DHS components, presumably because it is not pertinent to that specific agency's mission. For example, in many cases, information submitted by an individual to be cleared by the Transportation Security Administration for travel on domestic flights is not being used by Customs and Border Protection to clear the same individual for future border crossings. The failure to share this information creates redundancy, widespread inefficiency, and excessive traveler delays.

Redress is a vital function of the entire terrorist screening process; if implemented properly, it would enable DHS to streamline limited resources and focus on legitimate threats while permitting non-threatening individuals to travel freely. I have yet to hear a satisfactory explanation as to why the Federal Government can consolidate and manage a terrorist watch list that is used by disparate agencies, but cannot have a similarly

The Honorable Michael Chertoff

October 30, 2007

Page 2

consolidated “cleared” list that could be used to mitigate traveler inconveniences. The “Implementing Recommendations of the 9/11 Commission Act of 2007” created the Office of Appeals and Redress; however, the Department was unable to indicate what, if any, progress has been made in creating this office. The creation of such an office should lead to a more streamlined and efficient redress process.

Given the widespread use of the terrorist watchlist, the redress process is of paramount importance. As a result of the Department’s briefing given to my staff on October 9, 2007, additional questions were raised, and some clarification needed. Pursuant to Rule X (3)(g) and Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, I ask that you provide a response in writing to the following questions by November 7, 2007.

- Of the reported 14,400 requests for redress filed since February 2007, how many have been adjudicated?
- What percentage of the number provided in the previous question were misidentifications?
- Please provide a percentage breakdown of the reported 14,400 requests per DHS component.
- What is the targeted time frame to complete a redress inquiry? What is the actual time frame DHS TRIP currently requires to adjudicate a redress inquiry?
- What is the average number of open redress inquiries received and maintained on a weekly basis? What is the average number of redress cases closed on a weekly basis?
- What resources are being devoted to DHS TRIP? What resources do you anticipate will be needed to create and operate the Office of Appeals and Redress? Please include a detailed account of resources, including personnel and capital.
- When redress inquiries are referred to more than one DHS component, who determines which agency serves as the lead?
- During the briefing, DHS staff referred to the “Tier Two” review process. Please explain this review process in detail. Who is involved in this process? Of those involved, who assumes what responsibilities? What steps are taken during the process? How long does this process take?
- DHS staff stated they were unable to provide any percentages due to being in the middle of a system transition. When will the DHS TRIP system transition process be completed? Will this result in any programmatic changes to DHS TRIP?

The Honorable Michael Chertoff

October 30, 2007

Page 3

Please direct your written response and any questions concerning this request to Jeff Greene, Director, Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight at (202) 226-2616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and "T".

Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman

cc: Honorable Peter T. King, Ranking Member