

Statement of Senator George V. Voinovich
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
September 12, 2006

Yesterday, our nation observed the fifth anniversary of the tragic and violent terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. The brutal images of 9/11 will forever be burned into the minds of the American people. My own memories of visiting the Pentagon and being at Ground Zero shortly after the attacks will never fade.

Each anniversary of 9/11 renews our national resolve to fight the War on Terrorism at home and abroad. The American public should be reassured that our nation is undoubtedly safer, but we must remain vigilant, because Osama bin Laden has declared war on us. Our freedom and way of life is under attack by Islamic extremists who have hijacked the Islamic faith and launched a jihad against the United States, Israel, and anyone who shares our values.

Madam Chairman, thank you for holding this important hearing today to evaluate the federal government's progress in securing the American homeland against future attacks. Five years after 9/11, and more than three years after the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, it is appropriate for this Committee to take stock of our national homeland security policy and evaluate where we are and where we need to be.

Integral to this discussion is a review of how the Department of Homeland Security is coming together as cohesive entity. As my colleagues know, the creation of DHS in 2003 merged 180,000 employees from 22 disparate federal agencies and represented the single largest restructuring of the federal government since the creation of the Department of Defense in 1947.

Building stronger management capabilities is vital to the success of the Department. In order to effectively accomplish its complex mission of securing the nation from terrorism and natural hazards, DHS must have an effective management structure with experienced leaders who are capable of integrating the many separate departmental components and ensuring effective operations and planning.

I hope today's hearing will also include a thoughtful examination of ways we can improve our risk management capabilities. We all agree that it is imperative to secure our homeland against terrorism and strengthen our response capabilities, but we must also acknowledge that this country has finite budgetary resources.

It is simply not possible for us to guard against every threat – and frankly, if we tried to, we would bankrupt our nation in the process. As our national homeland security policy matures, we have to use our common sense and begin to prioritize by allocating our limited resources based upon risk assessments.

Secretary Chertoff, thank you for being here and for your service to our nation. I look forward to your testimony regarding the progress DHS has made and what I hope will be a candid discussion of the challenges the Department continues to face.

Thank you. Madam Chairman.