

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The DHS and DOE National Labs: Finding Efficiencies and Optimizing Outputs in Homeland Security Research and Development***

April 19, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “The DHS and DOE National Labs: Finding Efficiencies and Optimizing Outputs in Homeland Security Research and Development”:

“Thank you for holding this hearing to review the Department of Homeland Security’s involvement with the National Laboratories.

When the Department was created, the use of laboratories by DHS was one of the first questions posed. We all understood that the labs could serve as important incubators for products and technologies that would enhance this nation’s security. We all understood that some of these efforts may be expensive to undertake and have very low profit margins—making them unattractive to the private sector.

Yet, we all believed that research and development could yield new tools to fight terrorism. At that time, we agreed about the importance of research and development. We decided to permit DHS unprecedented access to labs owned by the Department of Energy.

The Office of National Laboratories within S&T was created to coordinate research and development efforts within DHS labs and DOE labs. Regardless of the location, the goal of the research would be the same—to support the homeland security mission. The alignment of DHS labs within the mission programs of the S&T Directorate has been changed over the years.

This committee needs to understand how these reorganization efforts improve the ability of DHS’ Office of National Labs to coordinate and oversee research and development projects that improve this nation’s security.

Additionally, because research and development is often a long and expensive process, this Committee needs to understand how the current climate of fiscal austerity will impact the work of these labs.

In a previous hearing, we were told that budget cuts would severely hamper on-going research projects and may cause new research to come to a standstill. Given the budgetary decisions made by my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, it is extremely important that Members of this committee have a clear understanding of the Department’s research and development strategy.

While we certainly should know about the role of the Office of National Labs, our focus must be broader. We must have an in-depth understanding of the strategy and rationale that determines how homeland security research and development funds are allocated—both in the government labs and in the private sector.”

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