

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****WMD Terrorism: Assessing the Continued Homeland Threat***

November 15, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee hearing entitled “WMD Terrorism: Assessing the Continued Homeland Threat”:

“The Commission on the Prevention of WMD Proliferation and Terrorism - “the WMD Commission” – produced a report entitled “World at Risk” in 2008. In that report, they told us that they believed that a terrorist attack would occur somewhere in the world by 2013, and that it was more likely to be an act of biological terrorism.

In a bipartisan response this spring, this Committee voted favorably to report H.R. 2356- the WMD Prevention and Preparedness Act of 2012 to the House. H.R. 2356 is a comprehensive bill that addressed the major actions recommended by the WMD Commission. The bill includes a range of provisions related to prevention, deterrence, detection, preparedness, response, and recovery.

We have not had a WMD attack in the United States. However, we must continue to move forward with closing the coordination and resource gaps identified by the WMD Commission. A potential WMD attack requires that we ensure that our first responders have the resources needed to be effective.

This includes investments in emergency communications, planning, and response equipment. This also includes state and local law enforcement having access to intelligence about imminent threats to their communities. The first responder grant programs’ importance to WMD preparedness should not be understated and must be provided at adequate levels.

I hope our conversation today provides an opportunity to understand the role and needs of first responders related to WMD preparedness. I also hope that as conclude this Congress, we can learn from missteps that have been made with regard to first responders. Many of these missteps have been exposed in hearings at both the Subcommittee and Full Committee Level.

Senseless cuts to first responder grant programs and eliminating urban areas from grant programs undermine the necessary preparedness for the possibility of a WMD attack.

We have also learned that funding for disaster response should not be held in offsets and politicized.

Additionally, we learned that overclassification of materials can lend to local and state responders being left in the dark about threats.

Mr. Chairman, these three are just examples of what we have heard this year. All of these relate to the first response to a potential WMD attack. It is my hope that as we continue on this road to keeping America safe, we allow funds to be used to strengthen and shape our disaster response and readiness.”

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