The House Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
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Statement of Chairman Dan Lungren

Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection and Security Technologies

"Securing Federal Facilities: Challenges of the Federal Protective Service and the Need for Reform"

July 13, 2011

Remarks as Prepared

The Federal Protective Service (FPS) is a vital component of our nation's homeland security. Securing government buildings is the mission of FPS and is critical to protecting hundreds of thousands of government employees working in federal buildings across the nation. These federal buildings have been assessed as key facilities, important to the operation of our Government and therefore, deserving of FPS protection.

Recent terrorist attacks have demonstrated that security at these government buildings is absolutely necessary. In 1995, the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City was destroyed with a truck bomb killing 168 people, including 19 children. Since then, other attempted attacks have occurred in government and public facilities including the fatal shooting of the Holocaust Museum security guard in June 2009 in Washington, D.C.; the man who flew a small plane into the Internal Revenue Service office in Austin, Texas killing an IRS employee in February 2010; and the recent discovery of an improvised explosive device (IED) placed near the McNamara Federal Building in Detroit, Michigan.

The Detroit IED incident was an example of how not to respond to suspicious packages. The egregious mishandling of this IED package raises serious questions about whether the Federal Protective Service is fulfilling its mission to secure federal buildings and demonstrates the continued vulnerability of federal facilities and the safety of the federal employees who occupy them.

Our hearing today, will examine several perennial problems which have impacted the FPS Mission. One problem identified by GAO and illustrated by the IED incident is the need for enhanced training for contract guards. This training curriculum and FPS certification should be available to the contract guards to insure that they possess the appropriate skills to meet their contract requirements. Additionally, GAO also highlighted the need for more robust FPS oversight of the 14,000 contract security guard force.

Poor management of the Federal Protective Service is another problem. Current plans call for FPS to once again reorganize within the NPPD Directorate. If completed, this would be the 3rd reorganization FPS has been involved in since leaving GSA and joining the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) organization in 2003. It is extremely difficult to develop and implement the policies and procedures necessary to effectively secure federal buildings when there is little continuity in leadership and structure within FPS.

Last year the Committee on Homeland Security held hearings on the Federal Protective Service in response to a series of scathing GAO reports and covert tests which identified serious shortcomings in the Federal Protective Service's ability to protect government facilities. One hearing was directly related to whether a Federalized guard force would improve security at federal buildings. Director Schenkel noted at this hearing that a federalized guard staff would increase the cost per guard by 32% and that the Department had no evidence a federalized guard staff would improve security.

A final thought regarding recent suggestions to federalize the FPS contract workforce. Administrator Pistole of the TSA tried to argue before our Subcommittee some months ago that the TSA federal workforce was in some way smarter and more skilled than the private contractors who screen at SPP airports. I totally reject the Administrator's premise and believe that if we educate and train workers equally that the private contractor is every bit as capable as the federal worker. This is why I have been a strong advocate for TSA's Screening Partnership Program which allows airports to opt-out

of federal screening and hire private screeners. We don’t need to add to the massive federal workforce. We should be encouraging competition and opportunity for the private sector to provide another more efficient alternative.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses this morning about what they believe the FPS challenges are and how we can improve the security of our government facilities.

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