



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX)
Committee on Homeland Security**

“Committee on Homeland Security 113th Congress Organizational Meeting”

**January 23, 2013
Remarks as Prepared**

First and foremost, I want to say that I am truly honored to preside here today as your new Chairman, and to receive the gavel from such an outstanding leader as Peter King. Chairman King, you have set an extremely high standard for this Committee, and we are all deeply appreciative of the leadership you have provided, and the important milestones you have achieved during your tenure. I know I speak for the Full Committee when I say that I look forward to continuing to work with you, and am grateful for your extraordinary contribution to our mission.

Ranking Member Thompson, I also want to thank you for all you have contributed to this Committee. Your leadership and dedication are invaluable. I look forward to working in partnership with you to accomplish the important goals we have together laid out for this Congress.

I also want to welcome back to the Committee our returning Members from the 112th Congress, as well as 9 new Republican and 6 new Democratic Members. Ranking Member Thompson and I will be pleased to formally introduce each of our new Members later in these proceedings.

Today we will adopt the Committee’s Oversight Plan, Committee Rules, and a pro forma Hiring Resolution. These documents represent the Committee’s commitment to a strong bipartisan

effort to accomplish the goals which are so essential to our national security. I would like to thank Ranking Member Thompson and his Staff for their collaborative approach to working with us to facilitate increased transparency, deliberation, and partnership.

Thomas Jefferson counseled that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance. Yet, I wonder if Jefferson ever could have envisioned the nature of the challenges America now faces in the 21st century. The threats we face today are complex and numerous, and continually evolving. Ensuring our national security requires not only robust intelligence and military strength, but also perseverance and imagination.

Since September 11, 2001 there have been 53 foiled terrorist plots against the United States. It is our job as a Committee to continue to protect America by working to identify both current threats, and those that continue to emerge such as Hezbollah in Latin America; the development of high-consequence weapons of mass destruction; the emergence of well-funded transnational crime syndicates; and the ongoing radicalization of U.S. citizens right here at home.

Moreover, while some terrorist groups have weakened, their cohorts remain committed to the goal of killing Americans both at home and abroad.

A poignant example of the persistence of the threat is seen in the rise of Al Qaeda in North Africa. Last week 3 Americans and 34 of other civilians were killed in a brutal terrorist attack on a BP gas facility in Algeria. While our military efforts have scattered and decimated the core of Al Qaeda's operations and leadership, terrorist franchises, like the one that attacked the BP facility, have found new safe havens allowing them to reconstitute. This is, unfortunately, just the latest evidence that the terrorist threat against the United States and the West has not subsided.

Al Qaeda in North Africa is a security threat we cannot afford to underestimate. Indeed, it presents a renewed call for vigilance within our Intelligence Community and the Department of Homeland Security both at home and abroad.

Additionally, the porousness of our borders leaves our nation vulnerable to continued infiltration, and ultimately to attack. In particular, our Southwest Border provides only a very thin line of protection against rising transnational crime networks, and spillover violence. Every year, criminals and drug cartels take advantage of our under-secured borders to enter the United States - and with them come drugs, weapons, cash, counterfeit goods, and any number of dangerous, illicit activities. Terrorists, intending to harm the American people, enter our country from Mexico. We must commit the resources necessary to protecting the nation's borders, both north and south - and east and west. This initiative must also include the reforming of our

transportation security to better implement a risk-based system, and improve technology and intelligence.

Another of our key tasks this Congress will be to provide rigorous oversight of the Department of Homeland Security. To date, the Department has not prioritized the missions outlined in its key strategic planning documents. This hinders the Department's efforts to effectively manage risks to the United States. As this Committee and the Government Accountability Office have repeatedly cautioned, failure to effectively address the Department's management and mission challenges could have serious consequences for America's national and economic security. Indeed, the Department's dysfunctional management hinders security operations and costs taxpayers millions in a time when every dollar counts. The Department must be held accountable for carrying out its critical mission effectively and efficiently. In the 21st century, strategy and efficiency are synonymous with security.

And finally, electronic protection for America's critical infrastructure remains one of our most urgent homeland security issues. In 2012, the U.S. suffered nearly 200 cyber attacks, including attacks on our banks; energy sector; and water and power suppliers. A successful, large-scale attack on our critical infrastructure would be utterly catastrophic. We simply cannot allow ourselves to remain vulnerable to a cyber "Pearl Harbor." It is the responsibility of this Committee and this Congress to ensure that America is secured against the kind of attack that would absolutely cripple the mechanics of our everyday life.

The enactment of comprehensive cybersecurity legislation will be one of this Committee's top priorities. Eighty-five percent of critical infrastructure is privately owned, and private industry must be engaged as part of the solution. And I am confident that by leveraging private sector relationships - and working together with our fellow House Committees and our counterparts in the United States Senate - we will be able to draft a cyber bill that will effectively address concerns raised by both industry and the public, and ultimately enjoy the President's support.

Another of our legislative objectives must be the reauthorization of the Department. Since the initial authorizing legislation that established the Department was adopted in 2002, Congress has yet to pass a comprehensive re-authorization bill for DHS. As authorizers, it is our fundamental responsibility to ensure the Department has the appropriate authority and resources it needs to carry out its critical missions.

I am heartened by the change to the House Rules of the 113th Congress defining this Committee's jurisdiction to include the "general management" of the Department. This is the first change to the Committee's jurisdiction in 10 years, and it bodes well for our continuing efforts to align the Committee's responsibilities with the original recommendations made by the

9/11 Commission. I intend to continue working with other relevant committees to optimize the Congressional oversight of the Department.

In the ten years since its inception, the Committee on Homeland Security has played a critical role in ensuring America's safety. As Members of this Committee, we are part of an important legacy of quality, bipartisan achievement. Yet ours is a Committee whose work is never done. We have a solemn responsibility to do everything possible to protect the American people.

I am confident that working together, we can move the discussion forward, and achieve the oversight and legislative goals we adopt today. But most of all, I am confident that working together, we will help to ensure America's continued safety and security in a world that is uncertain, and replete with new challenges and harsh realities.

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