



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX)
Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management**

**"Department of Homeland Security: An Examination of Ethical
Standards"**

**May 17, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

May 6-12th was Public Recognition Week. We set aside time each year to honor our public servants who keep us safe, care for our veterans, patrol our borders and find cures for rare diseases. They make our country stronger and make a difference in the world.

Most of our employees understand public service is a public trust. Each one has a responsibility to the United States Government and the citizens they all serve to place loyalty to the Constitution, laws and ethical principles above private gain. And most public servants adhere to this trust.

However, the Pew Research Center interviewed more than 3,000 adults about their views of our government. Fifty-four percent said the federal government is "mostly corrupt," while 31 percent said "mostly honest," and 11 percent said they did not know, or neither. The survey also showed just a third of Americans has a favorable opinion of the federal government, the lowest positive rating in 15 years.

A measure of dissatisfaction, these days, is to be expected. The country is in economic trouble and our leaders promise things they cannot deliver. What compounds this dissatisfaction are the government scandals.

There have been many reports of federal employees wasting taxpayer dollars, and in some cases committing crimes, which erodes the trust American people have in our government. The General Services Administration employees spent over \$800,000 on a conference in Las Vegas. The Department of Homeland security spent nearly \$1 billion on the Secure Border Initiative Network with little return on investment.

We have also found criminal activity in our bureaucracies; Customs and Border Protection (CBP) personnel collaborating with drug smugglers, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel filing fraudulent travel claims and Transportation Security Administration (TSA) personnel stealing personal belongings of passengers.

Since 2004, over 130 agents of the US Customs and Border Protection have been arrested, charged or otherwise prosecuted on corruption charges. Allegations and convictions include alien and drug smuggling, money laundering, and conspiracy. The DHS Acting Inspector General, Mr. Charles Edwards, states Mexican drug cartels attempt to corrupt DHS employees and this impacts national security. The IG also reports that since 2004 there has been a 38% increase in the number of complaints against CBP employees.

As recently as February 2012, an ICE agent pleaded guilty to 21 counts charging obstruction and corruption violations. These charges included illegally obtaining and disseminating government documents to individuals with ties to drug trafficking organizations. There have also been allegations and convictions of ICE agents accepting thousands of dollars in bribes from immigrants seeking US documentation.

A former intelligence chief for the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is accused of embezzling more than \$180,000 stemming from a travel voucher fraud and a kickback scheme that defrauded the government of more than \$500,000. Four other ICE employees pleaded guilty to involvement in the scheme to defraud the government.

In the past year alone, there have been numerous incidents of alleged misconduct on the part of TSA Officers and employees. Thousands of dollars in cash and items have been reported stolen. Dozens of TSA Officers were

fired over improper luggage screening because they allowed thousands of pieces of luggage onto flights without proper screening. TSA Officers have allegedly taken bribes allowing passengers expedited security checks. A number of additional allegations range from racially charged statements and actions to inappropriate sexual harassment.

A recent 22-count indictment alleges TSA employees took payments to provide drug couriers unfettered access through Los Angeles International Airport so that drugs could be smuggled into the United States.

Executive branch employees are subject to executive orders issued by the President and ethics regulations issued by the US Office of Government Ethics. Some agencies also issue supplemental ethics regulations that apply to their employees. Even though there are stacks of Government manuals, training materials and yearly briefings about ethics, lapses continue. They not only waste taxpayer dollars, they are a threat to the security of our nation.

While the majority of bureaucratic personnel are law abiding, this hearing will examine the ethical policies and procedures of selected components of the Department of Homeland and attempt to understand why these ethical lapses continue, and what is being done to prevent them from happening.

One final note; it is unfortunate the Department of Homeland Security, in the face of such serious ethical mishaps, refuses to provide witnesses from leadership to discuss these matters in the open before the American public. We requested the leadership from CBP, ICE and TSA. However, only CBP recognized the importance of these issues.

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