



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

*Opening Statement*

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**Statement of Subcommittee Chairman Susan W. Brooks (R-IN)  
Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications  
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Bioterrorism: Assessing the Risk”**

**Remarks as Prepared**

“Today’s hearing is part of the oversight work this Subcommittee has and will be conducting on bioterrorism and the Department of Homeland Security’s biosurveillance capabilities.

I was U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Indiana during the anthrax attacks in 2001. These attacks killed five people and sickened more than 20 others. These attacks showed us both the physical and psychological impacts of a bioterrorism event and were a reminder that a small amount of a biological agent can have a large impact.

In his 2003 report, “Catastrophic Bioterrorism – What is to be Done?,” Richard Danzig noted that the one gram of anthrax that was sent to Senator Leahy contained one trillion spores – an amount, that if effectively dispersed, could kill thousands of people and cause great economic damage.

I don’t say this to be an alarmist. We must be aware of all the threats we face. I fear that over the course of time, people have lost sight of the potential impacts of such an attack and why we must be vigilant and prepared. Because of this, I think that this hearing is important – to again talk about this threat and what we are doing about it.

In addition to this hearing, this Subcommittee is also doing several other activities surrounding bioterrorism and biosurveillance.

At the request of Ranking Member Payne and myself, as well as the Chairman and Ranking member of the full Committee, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) is conducting a review of the National Biosurveillance Integration Center(NBIC) to determine whether the NBIC is working to its potential, providing value to Federal participants, and worthy of our vital security dollars.

The Subcommittee is also continuing its oversight of the BioWatch Program, the Office of Health Affairs' flagship program designed to detect aerosolized bioterror agents.

BioWatch is at a crossroads. Members may recall that this Subcommittee requested a GAO review of the program in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, which was released in September 2012. Among its recommendations was that the Department complete an analysis of alternatives for the Generation-3 (Gen-3) system to determine whether this approach is the right way to go. The Institute for Defense Analysis completed this analysis and delivered the results to the Department late last year.

It is my understanding that the Department is currently reviewing the AOA and considering options for the future of the program. I urge them, as I will discuss with Secretary Johnson when he appears before the Committee tomorrow, to thoughtfully consider the results of the AOA to determine the most appropriate path forward for the Program. I look forward to receiving testimony from the Department on this issue in the near future.

As the foundation of this future work, we are meeting today to receive an update on the bioterrorism threat. And we know the threat is real.

In testimony before this Subcommittee in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, former Senator Jim Talent, Vice-Chair of the WMD Commission, reminded us of the Commission's finding that it was likely that there would be a WMD attack somewhere in the world by the end of 2013 and that, in their judgment, the attack was more likely to be biological. Bioweapons can be developed surreptitiously, transported with relative ease, and deployed insidiously over time.

We have no reason to believe that the threat has changed since that testimony. In materials prepared for his appearance before the House Intelligence Committee last week, Director of National Intelligence James Clapper noted that the Intelligence Community remains focused on the "...proliferation of chemical and biological warfare-related materials, and development of WMD delivery systems." In addition to nation-state actors, the Intelligence Community has also judged that al-Qaeda and its affiliates are intent on conducting CBRN attacks against the United States.<sup>1</sup>

So, I am pleased that we will be receiving testimony from a distinguished panel of witnesses to put this threat into perspective. I will note for the Members that we are planning to follow up this hearing with a classified briefing on the threat later this month.

With that, I look forward to the testimony and our discussion this morning."

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<sup>1</sup> *Unclassified Report to Congress on the Acquisition of Technology Relating to Weapons of Mass Destruction and Advanced Conventional Munitions, Covering 1 January to 31 December 2011*, at 7 (available at: [www.fas.org/irp/threat/wmd-caq2011.pdf](http://www.fas.org/irp/threat/wmd-caq2011.pdf)) (last accessed February 6, 2014).