



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)
Committee on Homeland Security
“Markup of H.R. 1417, the *Border Security Results Act of 2013*”

Remarks as Prepared

Our homeland security hinges on how well we can control who and what comes into this country. A porous border is a conduit for not only drug smugglers and human traffickers, but is also a vulnerability that terrorists can exploit.

We have all heard the empty claims by the Administration that the border is more secure than ever. But this rhetoric is in stark contrast to reality.

The extent of the gaps in border security is huge. A recent Los Angeles Times report showed that by using proven aerial surveillance equipment from Afghanistan, we can now see just how much we’ve been missing. The data shows that the Border Patrol is apprehending less than half of illegal border crossers in certain sectors, which is significantly less than current estimates. It is time to tackle border security the right way.

For too long the emphasis when discussing border security has been on the number of resources thrown at the problem, but this is only part of the equation. It is time to focus on actual progress. The Border Security Results Act fixes the current ad-hoc approach of plugging holes on the border, and finally addresses border security from the top-down by compelling a national strategy. The bill provides the Department with a roadmap to finally gain control of the border, and also requires a valid, verifiable way to measure progress.

We can upgrade our capabilities by incorporating existing taxpayer-owned technology such as Department of Defense Sensor Surveillance equipment used in Iraq and Afghanistan in order to gain comprehensive visibility of the border landscape. Once we have the complete picture of who we are missing, we can allocate patrol and response teams appropriately and ultimately gauge our success.

Requiring the Department of Homeland Security to finally develop and implement a serious plan to secure the border is the first step. The strategy and implementation plan required by this legislation will inform how we

apply the resources we send to the border. This will reduce duplication, streamline our spending, and ensure we are only putting taxpayer dollars towards what works, with a clear goal in mind.

That goal is a secure border, where we apprehend the overwhelming majority of illegal crossers and illicit materials, and at the same time facilitate the legitimate trade and travel that grows our economy.

With that as a guide, we have defined Operational Control in this bill based on the oversight work of the Committee. It is a reflection of testimony from the Chief of the Border Patrol – a 90% standard for success.

At last count, the GAO determined that DHS had less than half of the southwest border under Operational Control and 2% of the Northern border – an unacceptable outcome by any objective standard.

The bar we set in this legislation is tough, realistic and achievable. Stopping 90% of illegal crossers and interdicting significant portions of drugs coming into this country will increase our security.

We cannot let perfection be the enemy of progress. While we may never achieve air-tight security, that cannot be an excuse to do nothing. Additionally, we cannot continue to rely on measures such as apprehensions to give us a false sense of security.

Instead, security it must be based on hard and verifiable facts. This bill calls on the Administration to develop a series of measures at and between the ports of entry and in the maritime environment that are based on effectiveness.

Passage of this legislation will ensure that the American people can be confident that when we say we are secure, it's actually based on something tangible and measurable.

To ensure these measures are accurate, the Border Security Results Act includes verification steps at every stage. The bill uses Congress' investigative arm, the Government Accountability Office to verify the viability of the implementation plan of the strategy.

The metrics will be verified by a National Laboratory with expertise in border security, and a DHS Center of Excellence will serve as an additional layer of scrutiny and expertise.

We have seen the promises of border security coupled with immigration reform go unfulfilled in the past, and we cannot repeat 1986 all over again. If Congress again addresses immigration changes without focusing on the root of the problem, we will undoubtedly repeat this debate a decade from now.

I believe the legislation that we are marking up today is the solution to the border security problem that the American people have demanded we fix.

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