

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Securing Federal Facilities: Challenges of the Federal Protective Service and the Need for Reform***

July 13, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “Securing Federal Facilities: Challenges of the Federal Protective Service and the Need for Reform”:

“During the last two Congresses, the Committee held several full committee oversight hearings on the Federal Protection Service (FPS). Those hearings examined the effectiveness of that agency’s efforts to train, supervise, and monitor its contract guard service, contract management, and its placement within DHS.

Promises of reform were made. A new director was hired and FPS was transferred from ICE to NPPD. The Committee was told that FPS would develop a computer system to track training and certification of contract guards. The Committee was told that this system would ensure that every guard had the right credentials and was capable of doing the job.

And for a minute---I believed. Then, in February 2011, I was jarred back into the reality of FPS.

A bag containing a bomb was left sitting outside of the McNamara Federal Building in Detroit. A security guard, employed under a contract, did not understand the possible threat. He brought the bag inside the building. For three weeks, that bag with a concealed bomb sat inside the “Lost and Found” of a Federal building in Detroit. Finally, in mid-March, an FPS inspector discovered the bag, scanned it, realized the danger, and acted appropriately.

This incident paints the clearest picture I have seen of the importance of training and the reality of the threat we face. And this incident also illustrates the other problem at FPS—its fundamental ineptitude at managing contracts. Shocking as it may seem, in the aftermath of this incident, FPS did not terminate the contractor. Instead, FPS imposed a small monetary fine and accepted the contractor’s offer to conduct additional training. It is my understanding that this contractor earns \$1.6 million a year from guarding this one building. I cannot understand how or why we would pay companies that do not perform.

But apparently, paying for non-performance is not a problem at FPS. Recently, FPS decided to abandon the development of the promised computer system—called RAMP. That system, was supposed to help FPS monitor and verify the status of guard certifications and training. After spending \$41 million on this contract, FPS has concluded that the system doesn’t work and cannot be made to work. Where I come from, \$41 million is still considered a lot of money.

These practices cannot be allowed to continue. Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that you have decided to examine FPS. I suggest you begin where we left off. I would recommend that you take a look at HR 176—a bill that reflects this Committee’s extensive oversight in this area.

The nation cannot afford additional delay in securing federal facilities. Further, we cannot tolerate wasteful spending in pursuit of unproven technologies and schemes. Now is the time for FPS to be held accountable.”

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