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**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson**

***Protecting the Homeland:  
How can DHS use DOD Technology to Secure the Border?***

November 15, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Protecting the Homeland: How can DHS use DOD Technology to Secure the Border?”:

“This Committee has a long history of oversight of the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts to deploy technology along our Nation’s borders. Since the inception of DHS’ efforts, Department of Defense technology and expertise has played an important role.

To the extent that the DoD has technology or equipment that may be useful to DHS’s mission to secure the homeland, it makes sense for DHS to take advantage of those resources wherever possible.

Particularly in the current budget environment, the Federal government must make taxpayer dollars go further.

I hope to hear from our witnesses today about the existing relationship between DoD and DHS regarding security technology.

I would also like to hear whether the witnesses believe a more formal, comprehensive process for technology transfer between the agencies would be advantageous.

That being said, we should be mindful that there are limitations to this approach to border security technology. DHS and DoD have different missions, so it stands to reason their technology needs may differ.

In some cases, a less elaborate, more affordable technology may fully meet DHS’s requirements, and those kinds of technologies should not be overlooked.

Even where the agencies’ needs align, there are likely to be obstacles. For example, just because a technology works in Afghanistan does not mean it will work in Arizona.

Technology may have to be adapted due to differences in terrain and climate, or it may simply be inappropriate for use in the homeland.

Also, just because a technology fits within DoD’s budget does not necessarily mean it will fit within DHS’s budget. DoD’s technology acquisition budget is orders of magnitude greater than DHS’, so what is affordable for one agency may not be for the other.

I hope to hear from our DHS witnesses about these challenges and how they address them as they examine the array of available security technologies.

Also, since we are here today to discuss border security technology, I would be remiss if I did not address a report released this month by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) on Customs and Border Protection’s Arizona Border Surveillance Technology Plan.

In short, GAO found that DHS does not have the information necessary to fully support and implement the

estimated \$1.5 billion plan, which is the successor to the canceled SBInet program.

More specifically, the report states that “DHS has not yet demonstrated the effectiveness and suitability of its new approach for deploying surveillance technology in Arizona,” and that it needs to “document how, where, and why it plans to deploy specific combinations of technology prior to its acquisition and deployment.”

Also, GAO found the \$1.5 billion ten-year cost estimate for the program may not be reliable. I have said that the similarities GAO found between the failed SBInet program and aspects of the planned Arizona Border Surveillance Technology plan are both striking and troubling.

There is still time for DHS to avoid another failed border security technology project, but DHS must heed GAO’s recommendations by conducting a thorough and accurate cost analysis and carefully planning the purchase and deployment of technology.

I certainly hope CBP is following through on GAO’s recommendations, and I would ask Mr. Borkowski to speak to that issue today.”

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