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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

S&T on a Budget: Finding Smarter Approaches to Spur Innovation, Impose Discipline, Drive Job Creation and Strengthen Homeland Security

November 17, 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 “S&T on a Budget: Finding Smarter Approaches to Spur Innovation, Impose Discipline, Drive Job Creation and Strengthen Homeland Security”:

“Many of my concerns about the Science and Technology Directorate stem from our work in the Committee last year.

During my Chairmanship, we all worked hard to pass a Science and Technology authorization bill which sought to provide much-needed direction for the research and development efforts of the Department.

Today, we find ourselves at a new crossroads for several reasons.

First, I am concerned that the Department does not have adequate training that would allow program managers to help components identify capability gaps and write technical requirements.

I hope to learn how we can keep essential personnel and train them in light of severe budget cuts.

Second, it is still unclear to me whether there is a system to monitor research milestones and collect feedback from customers and end-users on the effectiveness of the services delivered by the directorate.

These milestones and feedback would allow this Committee to offer an objective assessment of the successes and failures of the agency.

Without objective measurement tools, I question how S&T will be able to continue to develop security solutions.

Third, I cannot tell you how many times a company, mainly small businesses, come to me and complain about how difficult it is to work with S&T.

I hope our witnesses have some evidence to share on how those relationships have been improved, and the potential impact of budget cuts on our outreach efforts, particularly in SBIR for small business at the Department.

Finally, I believe we are at a new crossroads because the Directorate will be challenged to prioritize or eliminate programs that protect the American people today.

With the support of many of my Republican colleagues, extreme budget cuts now impact the important work the Department has been challenged to complete.

The FY12 funding levels for the Department that passed in the House – with no support from the Democratic Members of this panel - are harsh by anyone’s reckoning.

The measure cuts the S&T budget by 52 percent — from \$827 million to \$398 million.

The cuts will have consequences, because if you have less money for science and technology, you can only do less scientific and technological research.

On the surface, S&T's budget at the level of the proposed cuts will eliminate 1,400 science and engineering jobs, wipe out dozens of programs, stall the development of technologies for border protection, detection of bio-hazards, cargo screening, and limit research into domestic IED detection that will leave mass transit vulnerable to attacks.

It is almost impossible to believe. Mr. Chairman, I hope the Committee will take these matters seriously as we learn how the directorate will carry out its strategic plans, management directives, and operational programs going forward.

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