

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Measuring Border Security: U.S. Border Patrol's New Strategic Plan and the Path Forward***

May 8, 2012 (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 “Measuring Border Security: U.S. Border Patrol’s New Strategic Plan and the Path Forward”:

“I have long encouraged the Department of Homeland Security to develop a comprehensive strategy for securing America’s borders. It is still my hope that the Department will do so. While not a Department-wide strategy, I am pleased that the U.S. Border Patrol has developed a new plan – the Border Patrol Strategic Plan: 2012-2016 – to guide the agency over the next four years.

With the support of Congress, the Border Patrol has experienced unprecedented growth over the last decade in terms of both personnel and resources. For example, the number of Border Patrol agents has more than doubled over the last decade, from over 10,000 in 2002 to over 21,000 today.

DHS also has added hundreds of miles of pedestrian fencing and vehicle barriers in that time, with about 650 miles in place along the southwest border today. Furthermore, DHS has deployed additional technology and equipment to the borders, including mobile surveillance systems, cameras, and UAVs.

Given these sweeping changes, it seems necessary and appropriate for the Border Patrol to set forth a new strategy based on current realities. That said, the Border Patrol Strategic Plan is a relatively brief document compared to the breadth and depth of the mission before the law enforcement agency.

I look forward to hearing more details today from Chief Fisher about the Strategic Plan and how it will be implemented in the near term and in the coming years. I do have some initial thoughts on the plan, however.

One of the concerns I expressed during prior oversight hearings on the rapid growth of the Border Patrol was the need to ensure proper training and supervision of less experienced agents.

I was pleased to see that the Strategic Plan gives consideration to supporting the men and women of the Border Patrol and ensuring the agency matures as an organization. The Strategic Plan also discusses the Border Condition Index (BCI), which the Border Patrol is developing to replace “operational control” as a metric for measuring border security.

We are told that the new BCI is intended to capture a more comprehensive picture of border conditions – including border security, public safety, and quality of life. It is my hope that the BCI will truly offer a better indicator of the situation along the border, and is not just a case of finding a new ruler when you do not like the first measurement. I look forward to hearing more details about the BCI at this hearing and once the new system is implemented.”

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