

## **Ranking Member Yvette D. Clarke (D-NY) Opening Statement**

### **Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Communications and the Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies**

#### **Joint Hearing: “First Responder Technologies: Ensuring a Prioritized Approach for Homeland Security Research and Development”**

**May 9, 2012**

---

Having a closer look at how the Homeland Security Enterprise and First Responders Group operates in S&T will be valuable. I also want to welcome all of our witnesses, and especially my fellow New Yorker, Chief Ed Kilduff, thank you for taking the time out from your responsibilities to come to Washington.

Over the years, many of our successes have come from our ability to forge practical solutions from tough challenges, and this Committee has been supportive of the S&T Directorate in becoming better prepared to make such contributions for first responders.

This progress is due to the hard work of S&T’s people, our better understanding of the precise problems, and to the increasing capacity to make use of the innovation from our laboratories, universities, and the private sectors.

With such a large and complex portfolio for federal, state and local first responder needs, the S&T Directorate has found it challenging to craft an overall strategy for first responders needs, and seemingly, a lack of mechanisms necessary to assess its past performance in a methodical way.

New technologies for first responders should be properly scoped, developed, and tested before being implemented and evaluated in a systematic way afterwards.

Over the past few years, GAO and OIG Reports have suggested that the Department had not yet developed a transparent risk-based methodology to determine what first responder projects to fund, how much to fund, and how to evaluate a project’s effectiveness or usefulness. Without clearly defined metrics, it becomes problematic for Congress to gauge project goals and evaluate funding.

Many feel that we will not achieve success unless overall strategies, rules, and evaluation metrics are more fully established.

I am eager to hear of the strides that the First Responder group may have made in evaluating first responder needs, developing new or readapting existing technology, creating standards, and prioritizing how first responder R&D moves forward.

Members on my Subcommittee, and I think I can speak for all Members on the Committee, have a instinctive feeling that the policies and funding decisions we make here in Congress are viscerally tied to first responders on the street.

We know that whatever we do here in Washington affects how firefighters, police, EMS technicians, border and maritime security, doctors and nurses, and all the other first responder groups that protect Americans every day, especially in times of disaster.

Quite simply, are we being sufficiently innovative in the way we are approaching first responder needs, and what are the processes for prioritizing, coordinating, and measuring the results of the Department's first responder R&D efforts?

One key issue is translating what works at the local level to other jurisdictions - being able to use success as a template - but NOT a one size fits all approach, so each jurisdiction doesn't have to reinvent the wheel.

What I have been told by my constituents is that our local first responders feel more empowered to develop strategic initiatives for themselves - and they recognize the importance of key issues such as interoperability and collaboration across jurisdictional boundaries. As we know, crises do not stop at city or county lines.

In the end, Congress needs to know how the first responder technology investments of today, position S&T for the future. We must have a clear view of how first responder projects are aligned with customer requirements, and how projects are prioritized and evaluated.

We've been told by Undersecretary O'Toole that decreases in S&T's budget will wipe out dozens of programs, stalling the development of technologies for border protection, detection of bio-hazards, cargo screening; and leaving in doubt research on IED detection, affecting our ability to assess vulnerabilities for mass transit.

Striving to do more with less is always the symbol of an efficiently run program, of any type, but trying to protect our citizens and nation with programs that are backed by limited and dwindling science and technology assets is another matter.

There are serious concerns about what programs the Directorate will have to give up as a result of the budget voted for by the Majority, and I expect we'll hear from Director Griffin how he will prioritize the projects of a reduced Homeland Security Enterprise and First Responder Group operation in the Department, and what his advice to the Under Secretary, and to Congress will be.