

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Stakeholder Perspectives on TSA Acquisition Reform***

July 17, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Transportation Security Subcommittee hearing entitled “Stakeholder Perspectives on TSA Acquisition Reform”:

“Earlier this year, the Subcommittee continued its longstanding tradition of conducting oversight of TSA’s acquisition practices when it held a hearing with representatives from TSA, GAO, the DHS Inspector General and the Department’s Science and Technology Directorate.

The testimony received at that hearing revealed that TSA continues to struggle to comply with Federal regulations and Department-wide directives when purchasing and deploying security-related technologies, does not monitor and effectively deploy its existing inventory of technology equipment, and comes up short, when it comes to contracting with small businesses.

Last year, TSA spent 2.39 billion dollars on goods and services. With billions of taxpayer dollars being spent by TSA every year, the majority of which go toward acquiring security-related technologies, it is critical that every dollar be accounted for and used to address known and emerging security vulnerabilities.

To accomplish that, TSA must set forth the technological requirements for each acquisition; including what existing capability gap would be addressed. While this may sound like a basic, common sense task, it is one that, according to GAO, TSA has repeatedly failed to conduct. In fact, in 2009, GAO reported that TSA failed to conduct a cost-benefit analysis prior to purchasing and deploying over 100 million dollars worth of AIT machines.

Had TSA conducted such an analysis, and considered privacy concerns, approximately 40 million dollars could have been saved. Certainly, some of that money could have been put to far better use by supporting promising technologies developed by small businesses.

Wisely spending taxpayer dollars on security-related technologies also requires a strategic vision. For too long, TSA has allowed the most recent security incident to drive an often rushed effort to acquire and deploy new technologies. While the agency needs the flexibility to respond to emerging threats, such flexibility should not come at the expense of a long-term vision. I look forward to hearing from each of the witnesses about how they believe TSA’s acquisition practices can be improved.

Specifically, I am pleased that Mr. Falconer has joined us today. I look forward to hearing from him regarding how TSA can improve its contracting performance as it relates to small businesses. Small businesses play a key role in both job creation and innovation. It is essential to both our economy and security posture for TSA to effectively partner with small businesses.

Before closing, I would like to acknowledge the bipartisan approach the Chairman has taken to conducting oversight and drafting legislation addressing TSA’s acquisition challenges. I look forward to continuing to work with you to find ways to enhance TSA’s performance in a manner that bolsters Department-wide acquisition reforms.”

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