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Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Securing Our Surface Transportation Systems: Examining the Department of Homeland Security's Role in Surface Transportation Technologies

Subcommittees on Transportation & Protective Security and Emergency Preparedness, Response & Communications Joint Hearing

January 30, 2018

When it comes to transportation security, aviation security dominates the conversation throughout the government, but given the diversity of today's terrorist landscape, it is well past time for the conversation to expand.

We all well know that in recent years, surface transportation systems both overseas and at home have increasingly been a target of lethal mass casualty attacks.

Last October, a terrorist in Manhattan ran a vehicle onto a bike bath killing eight people and injuring 11.

Just last month, a terrorist strapped a home-made explosive device onto his body and detonated it in the New York City's subway. While the blast was not powerful enough to kill four innocent commuters sustained injuries.

These recent cases indicate that, in the age of lone-wolf and small-cell attacks, the targeting of mass transit and other surface transportation centers is growing.

Further, surface transportation systems in Madrid, London, Paris, and Brussels have all been targeted by terrorists.

Therefore, there is no sensible justification for surface transportation security to garner only two percent of the Transportation Security Administration's budget.

Additionally, it is incumbent upon Congress to re-examine TSA's budget allocations for surface transportation security. It is our job to make sure that DHS is positioned to address this emerging terrorist threat.

I want to thank Ranking Member Watson Coleman for her leadership on surface transportation security. Her legislation, the Surface Transportation and Public Area

Security Act of 2017, would restore, revamp, and resource important programs vital to protecting our nation's surface transportation systems.

I hope today's conversation will focus on how DHS can do more to partner with stakeholders to make these systems more secure and resilient.

As we have seen with aviation sector, the introduction of innovative technological solutions is essential to strengthening the security of surface transportation.

To our witnesses, if there is technology on the cusp of development that needs research and development funding from Congress, let us know, we want to be helpful. If there are authorities that DHS needs to address surface transportation threats, tell us.

To my colleagues, I know we are expecting to see the fiscal year 2019 budget proposal from the Trump Administration in the coming weeks.

If you recall, the President Trump's fiscal year 2018 budget proposed cutting \$43 million in surface transportation security. In the event that the forthcoming budget proposes similar cuts to surface transportation, I hope you will join me in opposing such cuts.

As evidenced by the testimony and participation in today's hearing, now is not the time to make drastic, unjustified, and illogical cuts to our security. I look forward to engaging with both the witnesses and my colleagues on surface transportation security, not only here today, but also in the future.

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