



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
*Department of Homeland Security Reauthorization and the
President's FY 2018 Budget Request***

June 7, 2017

I want to begin by expressing my condolences to those who lost loved ones in the terrorist attack in London last week and offer my thoughts and prayers to all those injured. I join my colleagues in condemning this horrible violence and offering steadfast support to our friend and ally Great Britain. We remain committed to securing our homeland from such attacks while upholding the values that truly make America great.

Appallingly, in the immediate aftermath of the attack, President Trump used the tragic event as opportunity to take to Twitter to rant about what he has again admitted, and even boasted, is a "travel ban." Only afterward did he express support for the people and government of the United Kingdom. The President later took to Twitter again, this time to criticize his own Justice Department and the revised travel ban he, himself, signed after the courts found his initial travel ban unconstitutional.

If the courts were unsure about the Administration's intent with these misguided, un-American, unconstitutional travel bans, the President has removed any doubt quite literally by his own hand. Unfortunately, this behavior does nothing to address the very real security challenges we face at this critical juncture in our Nation's history. Meaningful homeland security policy is not issued in 140-character outbursts.

I wish I were more hopeful about President's ability to lead us through these challenges, but his recent homeland security budget request to Congress certainly does not inspire any confidence. Today, Secretary of Homeland Security John Kelly is before this Committee in support of that budget and the Trump Administration's priorities for the Department of Homeland Security. While we are glad to have the Secretary before us, I do not envy the job he has this morning.

The fiscal year budget he has been sent here to defend is, quite simply, indefensible, especially in light of recent events. Again, the proposal reflects President Trump's fundamental misunderstanding of the Federal government's role in national security and his misguided priorities for protecting the homeland. The world just witnessed brave first responders coming to the aid of the injured in London and Manchester.

Yet in his budget request, President Trump wants to gut grant programs that police,

firefighters, and other emergency responders across America rely on to help prevent and respond to such attacks.

Specifically, the Trump budget cuts over \$700 million from grant programs to state and local agencies, including pre-disaster mitigation grants and counterterrorism funding. That includes slashing the State Homeland Security Grant Program and the Urban Area Security Initiative by 25 percent. Every Member of Congress – Democrat and Republican – represents communities that would suffer under these cuts. President Trump’s first budget proposal claims to put us on a path to American greatness, but the only message it sends to our Nation’s first responders is: “You’re on your own.”

Americans can be assured that Democrats will be fighting in the weeks and months ahead to restore funding for these vital preparedness and response programs. I hope Republicans will stand united with us in the interest of our first responders and all Americans.

Similarly, at a time when the threats to the homeland are evolving at a rapid pace, President Trump wants to cut the research and development programs that aim to deliver the next-generation technologies we need to stay safe. His budget slashes the Department’s Science and Technology Directorate by \$144 million, devastating DHS research and development programs and halting progress on tomorrow’s cybersecurity technologies. Given the cybersecurity threats we face from adversaries around the world, including Russia, China, and others, the Administration should be redoubling its cyber investments, not gutting them.

Why does President Trump’s budget proposal make cuts to these essential homeland security programs? To help pay for programs that score political points with his base, but would do little or nothing to address the real security challenges facing our Nation:

- Building a boondoggle border wall that will cost billions and strip land from private property owners, but do little to better secure our southern border.
- Hiring a massive deportation force to tear families apart and take DREAMers and other members of our communities from their homes, while ignoring desperately needed staffing for our Nation’s ports of entry.
- Lining the pockets of the private prison industry with an additional \$1.2 billion in taxpayer money to expand immigration detention capacity to its largest size in history.

We cannot afford to squander taxpayer dollars on programs that fail to address the varied and sophisticated homeland security threats facing our country. We cannot allow political expediency to trump investing in the initiatives that are essential to protecting the homeland. The American people deserve better and Congress must demand better. As the budget process moves forward, I look forward to working with my colleagues to provide the Department of Homeland Security the budget it needs to do the job of securing our Nation.

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