

## **Opening Statement of Ranking Member J. Luis Correa (D-CA) Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency**

### *Watchdog Recommendations: A Better Way Ahead to Manage the Department of Homeland Security*

Thursday, February 16, 2017

I would also like to take a moment to recognize the men and women that serve in the DHS Office of the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office for the incredible work that you do. Independent, investigatory bodies, such as the OIG and GAO, are critical to keeping the Federal government accountable to the American people. The significance of your work cannot be overstated, as you are responsible for protecting the American taxpayer from waste, fraud, and abuse.

The importance of your work was shown even more, when on February 1st, you, *Inspector General Roth*, announced an investigation into the President Trump's Muslim Ban Executive Order. Once again, thank you.

Unfortunately, it appears that neither the President of the United States nor his Senior White House aides seem to comprehend nor appreciate the important role of oversight in our nation's system of checks and balances. This past Sunday, President Trump's senior policy advisor, Stephen Miller, declared that this President's national security decisions "will not be questioned."

Such a statement ignores the constitutional responsibility that we, as Congress, have to hold the Executive Branch accountable and the grand tradition of Americans challenging Presidents on their national security stances. This White House believes that it is above receiving oversight.

On the evening of January 13, an email from the Trump transition team instructed all transition team leaders to "reach out tonight and inform" the Inspectors General in their agencies "that they are being held over on a temporary basis," insinuating that the Inspectors General should seek other employment.

Shortly before this email was circulated, the new Secretary of DHS, General John Kelly, stated in his Pre-Confirmation Hearing Questionnaire that he "will take seriously the findings of the Department Inspector General and GAO and will maintain a rigorous system to track management issues and the implementation of corrective actions."

Today, I look forward to hearing from the witnesses about the important work they have completed, such as helping to ensure DHS continues improving its management operations.

Ensuring that DHS puts its limited taxpayer resources towards operating efficient and effectively is all the more critical at this moment in our nation, when DHS is expected to be directed to spend upwards of \$21 billion to build a wall along the US-Mexico border – many drugs and over 90 percent of cocaine produced in South America destined to the U.S. is done via maritime conveyance.

Turning to the GAO High Risk List, I am encouraged that the Department made some progress since the last report. I must extend credit to the former Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, whose initiatives such as Unity of Effort and the Joint Requirements Council, helped move the Department in a positive direction.

I certainly hope the Trump Administration takes DHS management seriously, because effective management leads to better employee morale, program efficiency, and Departmental unity.