

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson Opening Statement

Joint Hearing Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Efficiency

“Examining Ongoing Challenges at the Secret Service and their Government wide Implications”

Tuesday, November 17, 2015

10:00am

210 House Visitors Center

I join my colleagues in thanking the men and women of the Secret Service for their work during both the Papal visit and the 70th Anniversary of the United Nations. The dedication of the agents and officers of the Secret Service is admirable.

Unfortunately, their tireless work is time and again overshadowed by the exposure of systemic problems within the agency. The issues that lie within the Secret Service existed long before Director Clancy’s appointment; however, as head of the agency, Congress, the public, and the officers and agents he leads hold him accountable.

Prior to Director Clancy’s appointment, serious operational lapses and leadership failures led to Secretary Johnson’s appointment of an independent panel to review the Secret Service. This panel, known as the Protective Mission Panel, had several glaring findings and recommendations—one of these findings is what I have realized and articulated through my years of oversight of the Secret Service—the law enforcement agency needs to undergo a cultural change that includes leadership that is capable of fostering greater accountability.

The Panel stated the agency is starved for leadership. Unfortunately, it still seems as if the Secret Service has yet to be fed. Since the Protective Mission Panel completed its review, the Office of Inspector General has led investigations into misconduct involving Secret Service *supervisors* on more than one occasion.

The Inspector General found that in March at least four supervisors turned a blind eye when two veteran agents—including the head of the President’s Protective Detail—disrupted a bomb investigation by allegedly driving impaired through a barricade at the White House. Last month, the Inspector General found that at least 45 agents improperly accessed a 1980s mainframe personnel database to retrieve information in an attempt to embarrass a Member of Congress. Of those agents who may have broken the law by improperly accessing this database, approximately 18 of them were at the GS-15 and SES levels.

The findings also concluded the Director of the Secret Service, his Deputy Director, and his Chief of Staff, failed to take seriously that agents were discussing information about the Congressman’s personnel file. The Inspector General also made the finding that the Assistant Director of Training, the person appointed by Director Clancy to manage and direct all aspects of personnel career development and professionalism, suggested that the information found in the database be leaked in retaliation to Congressional oversight.

The IG’s findings further illustrate that there is a lack of leadership and accountability from the top down. In this instance, very little leadership and accountability was shown. Director Clancy

has indicated that the Secret Service will be expanding and undergoing a rigorous and necessary hiring phase. The new hires will be looking to their leaders for guidance.

As the Secret Service expands, it is our responsibility as Members of Congress to assist the Secret Service with adequate, necessary funding for its mission. Both the Protective Mission Panel and the Inspector General have indicated that officer fatigue can place protectees at risk. The agency also needs to have the capacity to properly vet employees before they begin work, rather than continuing the practice of having uncleared personnel working in sensitive areas such as the White House.

The new recruits should represent America and have opportunities for advancement. As of right now, the Secret Service's diversity numbers are dismal. Furthermore, it will be hard for the law enforcement agency's commitment to equal opportunity and inclusion to be taken seriously with a class action racial discrimination lawsuit still hanging over the Secret Service's head and the Secret Service using every delay tactic it can instead of resolving the lawsuit amicably.

There must be some sweeping changes made at the Secret Service. I know all the deeply-rooted problems will not cease overnight but we must get to the source of them instead of continuously glossing over, putting on band-aids, and going forward with business as usual. I look forward to working with the Secret Service to advance its mission.