

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act: Examining Remaining Challenges***

January 7, 2016 (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 “Transportation Security Acquisition Reform Act: Examining Remaining Challenges”:

“Today, we will examine remaining challenges TSA faces during the procurement process. These technologies, along with the TSOs who serve on the frontlines and the policies in place to ensure that the procedures carried out by these individuals and technologies are effective, compose the front line in our efforts to secure commercial aviation security.

We have known of the difficulties encountered by TSA when procuring new technologies. Given the vital role that these technologies play in keeping the traveling public safe, it is disturbing to know that such difficulties have—and continue to—exist.

The Government Accountability Office’s recent report regarding TSA’s screening technology test and evaluation process is another in a series of reports that details these difficulties. According to this report, between June 2010 and July 2015, there were 22 screening systems and upgrades that were accepted for qualification testing. Of these 22 systems, only 11 were considered mature enough to pass operational testing, with only 10 systems eventually being procured.

I am pleased to know that under the leadership of Administrator Neffenger, as evidenced with the five-year technology investment plan, as well as pointed out by the GAO, TSA is working to implement a third-party testing strategy that will eventually streamline this process.

During a recent roundtable, the Subcommittee heard from technology stakeholders detailing frustrations encountered while attempting to develop technologies to support TSA’s mission. Stories of how large companies make substantial investments to develop technologies to meet TSAs perceived needs, only to ultimately have TSA venture in a different direction, abound. We also hear stories of how small businesses attempt to develop technologies to meet the needs of TSA.

While a larger company may be able to survive a cycle in which a technology that they believed was needed and would possibly be procured ultimately was not, these small businesses simply cannot afford to do business that way. Venturing into this cycle with TSA, which can take years, can eliminate a small business’s resources.

I look forward to hearing from all witnesses about what can be done to help small businesses that have innovative and thoughtful ideas, better compete throughout this process.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge that TSA’s five-year plan, as required by legislation passed through the Committee last Congress, is indeed a step in the right direction in resolving some of its procurement issues. In the past, TSA reacted to security incidents to drive its efforts in seeking out and deploying new technologies.

Although this ability will always be needed, I am hopeful that the forward-looking approach evidenced by my conversations with Administrator Neffenger, along with his prior testimony before the Committee, marks a shift in the way we think about security technology innovation.

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