



Homeland Security Hearing: “Lessons Learned and Grading Goals for the Department of Homeland Security for 2007”

Thursday, February 15, 2007 – Today, the Committee on Homeland Security will hear testimony from Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson at a hearing entitled “Lessons Learned and Grading Goals for the Department of Homeland Security for 2007.”

Congressman Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman of the Committee on Homeland Security, is expected to deliver the following prepared remarks:

“Last week, this Committee had the opportunity to hear Secretary Chertoff present his budget plan for Fiscal Year 2008. The Secretary painted a picture of what the Department wants to be in two years and what resources it would need to get there.

“Prior to our hearing with Secretary Chertoff, we had the opportunity to revisit the Department’s enduring challenges with two distinguished watchdogs - the Comptroller General of the United States, Mr. Walker, and the Department’s Inspector General, Mr. Skinner.

“Over the past week, this Committee has been presented with two starkly different images of the Department. One is a rosy scenario and the other is a dire portrait. Mr. Jackson, what we need from you today is to hear your vision of how DHS can become more of a picture of health. More specifically, we invited you here today to tell us where the Department is today with respect to management, personnel and assets.

“When the book is closed on 2007, what will be written about the Department’s progress in addressing the lessons learned from the abysmal response to Hurricane Katrina; completing the corrective action plan needed to get off GAO’s “High Risk” list; improving the DHS’ ability to get a clean financial statement; enhancing the Department’s efforts to secure rail; and hiring and deploying personnel to patrol our borders, manage procurement, and prepare for terrorism and other disasters?

“As the Department’s chief operating officer, you should be able to provide us with specific benchmarks and goals for this calendar year. I am particularly interested in morale at the Department. It is the unseen hand in every situation and can undermine every plan and program you devise. I have seen your January 30th message to DHS employees about the OPM employee job satisfaction survey. In it, you describe DHS’ last-place ranking in nearly every category as a ‘clear and jolting message.’ You go on to say that both you and Secretary Chertoff ‘discussed these results with concern’ and you pledged to ‘improve job satisfaction for the DHS team.’

“What I need to know is how do you plan to fulfill this pledge and when will you begin the implementation process? As you know, time is of the essence here. The Federal workforce is graying and attrition permeates your Department. You must put in place strategies to turn things around and convince the men and women of DHS that the conditions will improve.

“This past week, the House voted unanimously on a resolution that pays tribute to the Department’s personnel. We are looking to you to honor them with you actions and make things right.”

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