



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“The Direction and Viability of the Federal Protective Service”**

May 1, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The Direction and Viability of the Federal Protective Service”:

“FPS was established in 1971 as a uniformed protection force in the federal government. The FPS mission--then and now---is to secure government owned buildings and protect the millions of people who work in or visit those buildings every day. The importance of the FPS mission became clear long before 9/11. The 1995 terrorist attack on the Alfred P. Murrah building in Oklahoma City brought home the fact that federal buildings could be targets for terrorist attack.

So unlike many scenarios which could happen, we know that a terrorist attack on a federal building has happened. Knowing that such an attack has happened should cause us to increase our resolve and fortify our resources so that it will never happen again. Because the Department is charged with keeping the federal sector secure from attack, FPS guards are often our first line of defense.

So we are here today to get some clarity concerning the Department's vision for FPS's future. Currently, FPS has about 1100 guards who are federal employees. An additional 15,000 private security guards protect the lion's share of federal buildings through contracts with FPS. The contracts for these private guards are the largest single item in the FPS budget. And every year the cost of hiring private security guards grows.

In Fiscal Year 2006, FPS paid private guards \$487 million to protect federal buildings. In Fiscal Year 2007, FPS will pay \$577 million for private guards to protect federal buildings. So in one year alone, the cost of private security guards has increased by \$90 million. This is a 20% growth rate. It is the duty of this committee to assure that this 20% growth in payments to these contractors represents money that is well spent, effectively administered and properly overseen. The American taxpayer demands that of us.

But at this point, we cannot say that the Department is effectively using this money.

Both the Department's Inspector General and the GAO have found that FPS has been lax in its oversight of these security contracts. The IG found that FPS had paid \$121 million to contractors without requiring all of the necessary paperwork. I

know that \$100 million may not seem like a lot around here, but in Mississippi that is real money.

Given this continuing need for security at federal buildings, and the growth in security guard contracts, it would be logical to think that the Department would increase FPS personnel. But that is not the Department's plan. We have been told that the Department actually plans on reducing and reassigning FPS guards. Instead of increasing FPS personnel, the Department plans on increasing the number of private security contractors.

The Department's plan needs strong contract oversight to succeed. Yet the Department's Inspector General and the GAO have questioned the FPS' ability to adequately monitor and oversee both the billing and performance of these private contractors. And while the use of private guards may not be a problem, we should remember that without adequate contracting oversight, we will remain unsure of the safety of our federal buildings and the security of the millions of people who visit them every day."

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