

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****Cargo Security at Land Ports of Entry:
Are We Meeting the Challenge?**

October 22, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border, Maritime, and Global Counterterrorism Subcommittee hearing entitled *Cargo Security at Land Ports of Entry: Are We Meeting the Challenge?*:

“America’s land ports of entry are critical gateways for travel and trade. Every year, approximately 11 million truckloads and more than two million railcars arrive at U.S. land borders.

The dedicated men and women of the Department of Homeland Security have the difficult task of detecting, interdicting, and investigating threats in this stream of commerce.

At the same time, they are charged with facilitating the legitimate trade and travel that is the lifeblood of the economy, both in border regions and across our country.

This is no easy task. Given the volume of commercial traffic crossing our borders, it is imperative that DHS ensure cargo trucks and railcars do not become vehicles for smuggling operations.

Just this month, a Canadian truck driver was arrested in Blaine, Washington, with 192 pounds of cocaine, worth more than \$3 million. In June, a total of 1,090 pounds of marijuana was discovered in two commercial trucks in El Paso, Texas. Incidents such as these are a warning sign regarding other possible threats coming into the U.S. through our ports of entry.

This method of smuggling narcotics or other contraband could also be attractive to those who may seek to do us harm. It is imperative that we address this potential threat.

DHS has made strides in utilizing inspection technology and equipment, encouraging stakeholders to assist in securing the supply chain, and enhancing cooperation among law enforcement agencies.

However, significant challenges remain. Many ports of entry were constructed decades ago and were simply not built to accommodate modern security technology or procedures.

In addition to infrastructure challenges, staffing has not kept pace with needs. Thousands of new Border Patrol agents have been hired in recent years, while only a relatively small number of Customs and Border Protection Officers have been added to the ranks at the ports of entry. These limitations not only undermine our security, but hamper the Department’s ability to expedite vital commerce.

Ultimately, we must do what it takes to secure our borders and ensure our ports of entry operate efficiently in moving goods and people across our borders.”

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

<http://homeland.house.gov>