

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

The FY 2010 Budget for the Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security

June 24, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “The FY 2010 Budget for the Office of Intelligence and Analysis of the Department of Homeland Security”:

“I would also like to thank Acting Under Secretary Bart Johnson for being present to testify before the Subcommittee for the first time in his new capacity.

First of all, I would like to commend Secretary Napolitano’s decision to shut down the NAO. It serves as an endorsement of this Committee’s long-held position.

From the very beginning, our Members were the first to shine a light on this poorly-conceived proposal that lacked the necessary civil liberties protections or law enforcement utility.

At this Subcommittee’s budget hearing last year, I expressed my deep concerns to then-Under Secretary Allen, that the ITACG program – created to integrate the intelligence analysis process, the expertise, and the participation of State, local, and tribal law homeland security and enforcement officers – was not functioning as Congress intended.

ITACG Detailees were not producing their own intelligence products and the recruitment process was inadequate due to ineffective marketing.

Today, while we still have much work to do, there is no denying that the ITACG is up and running and fostering more productive information sharing with State, local, and tribal law enforcement.

With continued oversight, I am more confident that we will achieve our goals.

While the ITACG has enjoyed some success, other areas of I&A are still making rookie mistakes.

For example, not too long ago, we learned that I&A lacked a formal vetting and approval process to review and certify reports prior to distribution to its non-Federal law enforcement partners.

As a result, the “Right-Wing Extremism report” was disseminated when, by Secretary Napolitano’s own admission, it was not ready for publication.

I am pleased that swift corrective action was taken by the Department to ensure that a new process was established requiring appropriate vetting and review by Department stakeholders, including the Office of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights.

Mr. Johnson, you bear the great responsibility of ensuring that I&A's operations are both efficient and effective.

I can assure you that this Committee stands ready to partner with you in this important undertaking.

This is why I want to make sure adequate funds are made available to ensure orderly operations and to cover personnel required to get the job done right.

I must say, I remain concerned that some of I&A's programs, such as the ITACG and Fusion Centers are not yet adequate in size and that I&A as a whole could be more appropriately configured.

There must be strength in personnel and structural organization to address I&A's priorities and objectives.

I will echo Chairwoman Harman about the challenges you face at I&A but with your background, I am optimistic that you will help to lead I&A in the right direction."

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