



Chairman John Carter

*Subcommittee on Homeland Security
House Committee on Appropriations*

**FY 2017 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security
February 24, 2016
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Today's hearing is called to order –

I'd like to welcome everyone to the first hearing on the Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2017 President's Budget Request. Mr. Secretary...it's good to have you here.

I understand several Members of the Tunisian Parliament are observing the proceedings today as guests of Mr. Price and the Department of State. It's an honor for us to have you here.

Mr. Secretary...because we enjoy a relationship that is candid and built on mutual respect, I'm going to get right to the point and tell you I'm disappointed with the budget submission.

As you know, the budget is \$40.6 billion, a decrease of \$381.3 million from last year. But it's not the amount of the request that worries me, it's the intellectually dishonest and politically insensitive gimmicks included in the request.

Right off the bat, the request creates a \$908.8 million hole by assuming an offset from new, unauthorized TSA fees.

It shortchanges the statutory minimum of 34,000 detention beds by more than 3,087 – a gap of roughly \$142 million.

It slashes FEMA's state homeland security and UASI grant programs by \$537 million – a reckless cut given ISIS's pledge to launch and inspire more attacks on the U.S.

It reduces Border Patrol's staffing by 300 agents on the grounds that attrition rates exceed new agents hired. While this is a fact, DHS has yet to present any analysis that supports the assertion that a staff cut will not increase risk to CBP's mission to secure the border.

At Secret Service, the budget fails to include \$10 million in change of station costs, which assures agents get a respite from the grind of VIP protection, something we all agree is necessary to improve morale.

I have other questions about your budget's priorities. For example, the request buys back hundreds of millions of dollars of cuts made last year for staff positions that are not filled today.

It includes \$150 million for a lengthy design process for the new Coast Guard heavy icebreaker, of which only \$25 million can be obligated in FY17. While I believe we need a new heavy icebreaker, this funding request precedes a sound procurement funding strategy.

More than \$225 million is requested for a new FEMA headquarters at St. Elizabeths. Does a new building really outweigh the need to secure the border or provide homeland security anti-terrorism programs?

I'm somewhat comfortable with the \$250 million increase proposed for cybersecurity enhancements, but not if the majority of the funds are for increases to personnel.

So, Mr. Secretary, I hope I've been clear that this request is a major disappointment after last year.

To be fair, I do appreciate your continued emphasis on management reform, better requirements analysis, improved budget justifications, and a commitment to institutionalizing joint operations across DHS components. I look forward to hearing what you learned from the new, common appropriations structure you adopted this year, and I appreciate the level of effort made to undertake the changes.

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