

The Honorable John Carter
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
FY 2014 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security
10:00 AM | Thursday | April 11, 2013 | 2359 RHOB
Opening Statement As Prepared

Hearing is called to order –

Today, we welcome back Secretary Napolitano. Madam Secretary, we thank you for being here and look forward to your testimony on the President’s budget request for the Department of Homeland Security for fiscal year 2014.

Madam Secretary, once again DHS finds itself at a crossroads.

As our budgetary constraints tighten and true threats to the homeland persist, DHS must find a way to accomplish its vital mission with increasingly scarce resources.

Specifically, DHS must find a way to adequately support its costly workforce and necessary operations – including enforcement – and also follow-through on essential upgrades in border security technology, Coast Guard acquisitions, and necessary research.

Budgeting for competing priorities with limited resources is not a new challenge; in fact, it has been the hallmark of the Appropriations Committee’s work since its inception in 1865.

And, that is why this Subcommittee has adhered to three core principles since it was established more than ten years ago:

1. Unwavering support for our frontline personnel and essential operations;
2. Clear alignment of funding to results; and
3. True fiscal discipline – meaning, that we provide every dollar needed for homeland security, but not a penny more.

And that brings us to the Department’s budget request for fiscal year 2014 and recent events.

First, your FY14 budget priorities defy logic – more money for headquarters consolidation and research, but deep, shameful proposals to cut to operations, including: a proposed reduction of 826 Coast Guard military personnel; a proposed cut of nearly 40% to Coast Guard acquisitions; a proposed reduction of 2,200 ICE detention beds; and a proposed reduction of more than 1,000 full-time positions in ICE, resulting in substantial decreases to investigations into everything from threats to national security to child exploitation to cyber-crime to drug smuggling.

Secondly, what I have seen in the last few months – and what I believe is apparent with this budget request – is a complete lack of candor...and that is something that, as Chairman, I cannot and will not tolerate.

I'm not talking about information on internal policy deliberations or pre-decisional discussions within the Administration...I'm talking about facts....facts about what things cost and facts about actual performance.

Madam Secretary, the statutory mandates and reporting requirements within our bill are not flexible, they are the law.

What I am getting at is the Department's repeated failure to submit numerous required plans and reports on time – and this includes nearly all of the 12 reports and plans that were statutorily mandated to be submitted with the budget yesterday morning.

Furthermore, what I am getting at is the Department's failure to answer basic, factual questions about program costs and performance. We've asked repeatedly about mandatory E-Verify costs. We've asked repeatedly about resource implications of new USCIS programs. We've asked for updated information about the Department's sequester impacts given that the fiscal year 2013 appropriations bill was enacted more than two weeks ago. And three weeks after the unwarranted release of thousands of ICE detainees, I had to hold a hearing to get an entirely confusing and incomplete accounting of the incident, including that ICE released ten Level 1 criminal aliens and 159 Level 2 criminal aliens.

Madam Secretary, let me be blunt— if DHS can't clearly explain how it is proposing to spend the taxpayers' limited dollars on its programs and projects; won't show how funds meet mission requirements; and refuses to answer Congress' basic oversight questions, then we have little choice other than to hold the Department's leadership accountable and cut requested, but unjustified funding.

So, when DHS has a statutory mission to fulfill, we expect a legitimate and adequate budget to support it.

When the law mandates a spend plan, we expect compliance.

When we ask a question for factual information, we expect straightforward and prompt answers.

Instead, we are getting little more than excuses, delays, and outright unresponsiveness.... and, that ends today.

My point is simple: at a time when our budget is hemorrhaging with red ink, the Department has to get its budgeting right. And, that means meeting oversight responsibilities and clearly aligning requested funding to intended results for our Nation's security...and that is the commitment I am going to ask of you here today...the American people deserve no less.

Madam Secretary, I think it is clear that we have a lot to cover here today. Before I recognize you for your testimony, let me turn to our distinguished Ranking Member and former Chairman for any remarks he wishes to make.

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