

Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper

“The Department of Homeland Security at 10 Years: Harnessing Science and Technology to Protect National Security and Enhance Government Efficiency”

July 17, 2013

As prepared for delivery:

Earlier this year, the Department of Homeland Security turned ten years old. To mark that anniversary, Dr. Coburn and I announced that this committee would hold a series of hearings examining whether the Department is effectively and efficiently accomplishing its core missions. Today’s hearing – the second in our series – will focus on the role of the Science and Technology Directorate.

Threats to our national security evolve constantly. So too, then, must the strategies and technologies we use to combat them. That’s where the Science and Technology Directorate comes in. The work performed by the men and women at the Directorate cuts across all of the various components and missions of the Department. That work involves the harnessing of cutting-edge technology and research and development projects from the private sector, universities and the National Labs to deploy force multipliers that can make us more effective in the effort we embarked on after 9/11 to prevent and respond to terrorist attacks and natural disasters. In essence, the Science and Technology Directorate functions as a problem solver.

For example, the Science and Technology Directorate worked closely with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) to develop a better x-ray system for checked baggage. As a result of that work, a 10 percent reduction in false alarms rates is expected. This is projected to save millions of dollars in efficiencies through the reallocation of staffing costs.

As another example, the Directorate examined agent operations at two stations along the southwestern border in Texas that process apprehended illegal immigrants. It recommended improvements to their operations that enabled the two border stations to significantly reduce their processing time, saving up to two hours per illegal immigrant processed. This enabled an additional officer to remain in the field rather than be stuck in the office processing paperwork.

In its early days, the Directorate was the subject of criticism as it carved out its role in the Department. It focused then on basic research which, in some instances, could not be quickly put to use. Today, I believe that the Directorate has proven itself to be more effective. More often than it has in the past, it has a laser focus on development of critically needed products that can be used immediately.

As we all know, the fiscal environment in the federal government has been very challenging over the past several years. This underscores the urgent need for agencies across government to spend taxpayer dollars more wisely. The Science and Technology Directorate can – and has been – a key part of the Department of Homeland Security’s efforts in that regard. It is critical, then, that it continue to work aggressively and effectively with Department components and first

responders to find solutions that allow DHS and its partners to operate more efficiently and effectively.

I thank the witnesses for coming today and look forward to their testimony – especially about how we can continue to use the Science and Technology Directorate to get better results for less money – something I'm determined to use my Chairmanship of this Committee to push throughout our federal government.

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