

**Opening Statement of  
Senator Susan M. Collins**

**The Homeland Security Department's  
Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2013  
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**

**March 21, 2012**

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Today, the Committee will review the 39.5 billion dollar budget proposal for the Department of Homeland Security.

I am pleased that the budget recognizes the seriousness of the cyber threat by including a 74 percent increase in the Department's cyber security budget. This level would help reduce vulnerabilities in the federal cyber domain by hastening deployment of intrusion prevention tools on government computer systems. The funds would also strengthen the Department's information-sharing capabilities and increase support to the US-Computer Emergency Readiness Team, which responds to cyber incidents and helps the government and the private sector mitigate cyber risks.

Of course, we must also continue to find savings within the Department's budget in recognition of the severe financial constraints that are today's reality.

This Committee outlined many cost savings and efficiencies in its reauthorization bill reported last fall. For example, our bill would mandate a five percent cut in two years from the budget for field components, to be achieved through field office consolidation, administrative and logistical cost savings, and operational efficiencies. Our plan also eliminates two offices and five programs, consolidates three offices dealing with travel security, and allows DHS labs to collect fees from outside users.

For the most part, the Administration's proposal ignores our specific cost savings and efficiencies, which is puzzling to me.

The President proposes eliminating or combining several homeland security grant programs. While some consolidation may be desirable, the Department must ensure that it does not jeopardize the progress that has been made in achieving such goals as interoperability of communications equipment used by first responders.

It is also uncertain how the baseline state allocations for the newly proposed National Preparedness Grant Program would work, given the Department's use of the phrase: "funding allocated in accordance with a *population driven formula*."

This proposal appears to negate the current state minimum grant formula this Committee wrote in the 2007 Homeland Security law to ensure that all states achieve the capability to prevent, respond to, and recover from a terrorist attack or other catastrophic event.

We cannot forget that two of the September 11<sup>th</sup> hijackers, including ringleader Mohammad Atta, started their trail of death and destruction from Portland, Maine. Others trained and plotted far outside major urban areas. More recently, the arrest of two Al-Qaeda in Iraq affiliates in Bowling Green, Kentucky, has served to remind us that homeland security challenges are not confined to large cities.

For the state of Maine, with its long, rural border with Canada, it is particularly important that DHS continue to employ the right mix of resources, ensuring an effective use of personnel, technology, and international, state, and local agency partnerships to keep the border open to our friends, but closed to those who would do us harm.

And any state can experience catastrophic weather or another natural disaster that tests its capacity to save lives.

The budget request includes 10 million dollars for technologies to help secure the Northern Border. Operation Stonegarden funding, however, remains critical to this goal, by putting boots on the ground, in the form of local law enforcement serving as force multipliers in partnership with CBP. I am, therefore, concerned that the President's budget would simply collapse this successful program, and other key programs like the Port Security grants, into a single new program.

During last year's budget hearing, I expressed my concern about whether the Coast Guard has the necessary assets for its very important maritime security role, which has been especially critical since 9/11 and in response to emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina and the Gulf oil spill. The plan last year was to replace 12 High Endurance Cutters, whose average age is 44 years old, with only eight National Security Cutters.

The Administration's new request is much worse. It proposes only six National Security Cutters and delays the acquisition of the first Offshore Patrol Cutter by another year.

Yet, as recently as January of this year, DHS provided the Deepwater Implementation Plan Annual Report that supported the Coast Guard's methodology for determining the appropriate Deepwater fleet mix, including its planned eight National Security Cutters.

The need for recapitalizing the Coast Guard's fleet is more and more evident. The Coast Guard has reported that it lost 528 operational cutter days last year due to engineering failures in the service's aging High Endurance Cutters or HECs. That is the equivalent of losing three HECs from the Coast Guard fleet in 2011. In comparison, the Coast Guard lost 228 HEC operational days in FY 2007. This trend is unacceptable and highlights the importance of keeping the Coast Guard modernization effort on schedule.

Last month's tragic crash of a Coast Guard helicopter on a training mission over Mobile Bay is a reminder of the significant personal risk that the brave men and women of the Department face every day.

At a time when budgets are tight, difficult decisions must be made, but we must ensure that the priorities set by the Administration and Congress do not result in a Department that is unable to respond to catastrophic incidents, whether created by man or nature.