



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
“The Homeland Security Department’s Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2013”
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
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The hearing will come to order. Good afternoon and thanks, Madame Secretary, for being here. In the face of record deficits and a national debt now heading toward \$16 trillion, it’s obviously imperative the federal government get its spending under control.

Budgets have to carefully balance our nation’s needs with what we can afford. Even something as important as securing our homeland from terrorists and cybercriminals – or being prepared for natural disasters like the devastating tornadoes that recently swept through the south and Midwest – requires a cold-eyed look at our national ledger.

With this combination of realities in mind, I want to commend President Obama and Secretary Napolitano for presenting us with what I believe is a responsible budget request in these times. It holds spending at essentially last year’s budget level. Adjusted for inflation, this budget for FY13 is lower than it was for the Department in FY2009.

But this budget still increases investments in certain key areas where we need to strengthen our abilities to meet emerging threats. In other words, it makes some tough priority judgments. It pays for these increases by finding efficiencies and administrative savings throughout the Department.

Most notable to me is the significant increase of \$325.8 million in cybersecurity funding, for a total request of \$770 million for cybersecurity.

I couldn’t agree more with this strong commitment to improving our cyber defenses and, as in in the bill this Committee has reported out, for placing much of that responsibility within DHS as our lead civilian agency.

The Department simply can’t carry out the kind of defenses we need it to for the homeland without the kind of funding that this budget requests.

I am also pleased to see the Administration restored \$212 million to the Science & Technology Directorate – for a total request of about \$830 million. This is one of those parts of a department that probably doesn’t have a vast constituency supporting it. And yet the work done by the Directorate is vital to our capacity to develop counter measures and detection techniques against for instance conventional explosives and nuclear material, or to strengthen our defenses against cyber attack and bioterrorism attack.

So this additional money that goes to the Science & Technology Directorate is money spent wisely, because it’s really an investment in a safer future. As has been the case with money that’s been invested in similar departments in the Department of Defense it can—and I’m confident will—spin off new technologies, products and services in the private sector, which will help our economy and create jobs.

On the other hand, I am concerned that the budget includes a number of attempts to circumvent Congressional authorizing committees by making legislative and organizational changes to the Department through the appropriations process.

For example, the administration's budget proposal would fundamentally change the nature of core homeland security grants that this Committee created by eliminating programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program, the Urban Areas Security Initiative and port and transit security grants – and replacing them with a new program that adds natural disasters as a primary focus.

We created these programs specifically to help state and local governments prepare for terrorist attacks, even though when properly implemented they also help localities prepare for and respond to natural disasters.

I have questions about whether the new grant program as proposed would be duplicative of the existing all-hazards programs, such as the Emergency Management Performance Grant program.

But I must say I am really perplexed that the Administration is proposing to make dramatic changes to these statutory programs without submitting legislation to the Committees, such as ours, with jurisdiction over these programs.

This Committee also needs to take a closer look at the Administration's plans to reorganize some components and programs, including the proposal to take US-VISIT out of the National Protections and Program Directorate and transfer its screening duties to Customs and Border Protection and its visa over-stay duties to Immigrations and Custom Enforcement. And I'll have questions about this and some of the other parts of the proposal that trouble me.

But in sum, I believe that Secretary Napolitano and the administration has put forth a responsible budget request, and I look forward to your testimony and questions that follow.

Senator Collins.