

**Opening Statement
Ranking Member Ralph Hall**

**COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION**

Next Generation Border and Maritime Security Technologies: HR 3916
Thursday, November 15, 2007
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
2318 Rayburn House Office Building

Chairman Wu, thank you for holding this hearing on border security and the bill HR 3916 that I introduced just a few weeks ago. I believe this is a crucial issue for this Committee to discuss. And I would like to thank you and full Committee Chairman Gordon for cosponsoring this legislation and bringing this capable panel before us today. I'd also like to thank Mr. McCaul for the substantial contribution he made to the bill.

Border security is a concern of all members of Congress. We have nearly 7,500 miles of land border with Canada and Mexico, over which half a billion people and 2.5 million rail cars pass per year. In addition we have over 300 ports that see over 9 million cargo containers each year. Meanwhile, the Government Accountability Office estimates that 1 in 10 serious drug and weapon violators and illegal immigrants pass through airports and land borders undetected.

We have a myriad of reasons for wanting strict control over this traffic. For instance, according to Department of Justice statistics, over 26,000 kilograms of marijuana were seized in northern border states in 2005 while over 30,000 kilograms of cocaine, heroine, and methamphetamine were seized within 150 miles of the US/Mexico border in 2006. Stopping the flow of narcotics across our border remains key to our efforts to curb illegal drug use. I know many Members of this Committee have worked tirelessly to end the scourge of methamphetamine in our nation. Yet, success at restricting access to meth ingredients here in the States has led drug dealers to import more across our borders.

The threat of terrorism also compels us to re-examine our borders. Whether we're talking about foreign groups trying to infiltrate our country or home-grown terrorists seeking weapons and supplies, our borders remain a critical element of our defenses. Major efforts in this area are well underway. With the help of the Science and Technology Directorate, Customs and Border Protection has created a massive screening program to detect nuclear material that might be smuggled in via cargo containers. Our enemies, however, are adaptive and guileful. One of our witnesses today, Dr. Jackson, has tracked a number of terrorist groups and has sage advice about our need for a multi-layered defense.

Finally, in fiscal year 2005, US Border Patrol agents apprehended 1.19 million people attempting to enter the country illegally. While I understand the concerns many Members have regarding comprehensive immigration reform, we should not allow that issue to stymie progress deterring terrorists, drug smugglers, and human traffickers.

I believe this Committee is ideally positioned to strengthen control of our nation's borders through bipartisan legislation supporting effective, efficient, and evolving

defenses. H.R. 3916 begins this effort. The sections in this bill reflect a single underlying theme: the Science and Technology Directorate at DHS needs to establish long-term goals and objectives for border security and broaden science and technology community involvement. The bill highlights three long-term research areas, unmanned aerial vehicles, tunnel detection, and anti-counterfeit technologies, that promise to significantly improve border security across all the threats we currently face.

Section 1 requires S&T to include cost and operational objectives in any near-term application development. This section is meant to ensure that both S&T and the DHS component that will eventually own and operate the equipment developed have agreed to baseline requirements for operational as well as technical objectives. This requirement can easily be met through the Technology Transfer Agreements (TTAs) that S&T currently negotiates for development work.

Section 2 extends the S&T directorate's advisory committee through 2012. The HSSTAC was created with the original Homeland Security Act, but lapsed once in that time. Undersecretary Cohen has reconstituted the committee and begun seeking their advice on specific topics. However, the committee will lapse again in December of 2008 without congressional action.

Section 3 specifically addresses long-term planning in the border security realm by tasking the National Research Council with a needs assessment and road-mapping request. In 2002 the National Academies completed a 90 day study titled "Making the Nation Safer" that gave a general overview of how S&T could support the fledgling DHS. This section would allow the NAS to look specifically at one sector of DHS S&T. The document produced by the NRC would give program managers at DHS a longer-term perspective than is provided through the 1-3 year IPT planning process. If successful, similar reports could be commissioned for the other major DHS S&T divisions, such as Explosives, Chem/Bio, or Cybersecurity.

Section 4 directs the Secretary of DHS to take an active role in safely incorporating unmanned aerial vehicles into the national airspace. UAV's cannot currently fly in the US without special permission from the FAA. DHS is involved in an inter-agency planning group, the JPDO, to design the nation's next generation air traffic control system, including UAV use. Given the high likelihood that DHS components would operate UAVs in the US, the department should take a more active role now in planning for their introduction.

The tunnel detection program described in Section 5 aims at a persistent smuggling problem. Organized crime has the time and resources to avoid most border surveillance by simply digging right past them. However, detecting tunnels is remarkably difficult and solutions in the 1-3 year time-frame are not likely.

Similarly Section 6 asserts Congressional interest in a sustained program to defeat counterfeiting. Activity in this area is broadly distributed in the federal government with DOD, Treasury, Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, State, and Justice all pursuing various aspects. DHS S&T, however, does not have a devoted office or program in this area despite the clear impact on agencies such as ICE and CBP.

Border security is one of the most difficult problems faced by scientists and engineers. It is a complex system of systems that will require concerted, interdisciplinary attention over many years. I urge this Committee to take the lead in Congress to push a long-term, adaptable, science-enabled border security policy.