

**Opening Statement of
Ranking Member Senator Susan M. Collins
“The Future of Homeland Security:
The Evolution of the Homeland Security Department’s Roles and Mission”
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
July 12, 2012**

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Nearly 10 years ago, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security brought together 22 different agencies into a single Department to focus on protecting our country and its citizens.

Yesterday, we explored the emerging security threats our nation is likely to confront. Today, we will examine whether DHS is well-positioned to address these as well as other, longer-standing threats.

The changing threat landscape at home and abroad requires the Department to be nimble and imaginative, effective and efficient, qualities not often associated with large bureaucracies. Yet the men and women of DHS can take pride in the absence of a successful large-scale attack on our country during the past decade and in the Department’s contributions to thwarting numerous terrorist plots.

There have been successes and failures over the last 10 years. Information sharing has improved, but remains a work in progress. Ten years ago, we envisioned that DHS would be a clearinghouse for intelligence. Although incidents like the failed Christmas Day “underwear bomber” make clear that information sharing is still imperfect, numerous public and classified counterterrorism successes since 9/11 demonstrate that information sharing has indeed improved.

This is also true with respect to information sharing between DHS and the private sector - an essential partner in the protection of the homeland, as 85 percent of our critical infrastructure is privately owned.

The growing network of state and local fusion centers also presents opportunities not only for the improved dissemination of information, but also for the collection and analysis of intelligence from the local level. As we discussed yesterday, however, these centers have yet to achieve their full value in aggregating and analyzing local threat information.

TSA, the agency within DHS that is most familiar to the public, has strengthened airline passenger risk analysis, but it troubles many Americans to see TSA screeners putting the very young and the very elderly through intrusive, and in most cases unnecessary, pat downs. TSA is making progress toward implementing more intelligence focused, risk-based screening through such efforts as Pre-Check, but many challenges remain for TSA.

DHS has bolstered the security of our borders and identification documents, but two Iraqi refugees associated with al Qaeda in Iraq were arrested in Kentucky last year. When a bomb

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maker, whose fingerprints we had had for some time, is able to enter our country on humanitarian grounds, it is an understatement to say that “work remains” -- as DHS’s self assessment report states.

In order to meet and overcome current and future threats, DHS must support its components with stronger management. Since 2003, GAO has designated the Department as “high risk” because of the management and integration challenges inherent with such a large undertaking. DHS must implement changes that will hasten the day when the Department is no longer included on GAO’s high-risk list.

The roles of the Department’s components have evolved over time. As a positive example, I would note the adaptability and “can do” attitude of the Coast Guard. I don’t believe there is another agency within the Department that has done a better job of adapting to new challenges and its expanding post 9-11 mission. This was never more clear than after Hurricane Katrina. As this Committee noted in its report on Katrina, the Coast Guard demonstrated strength, flexibility, and dedication to the mission it was asked to perform, and saved more than half of the 60,000 survivors stranded by the storm.

Many experts have predicted a disaster in the cyber realm that would compare to Katrina or Pearl Harbor. Compared to 10 years ago, the cyber threat has grown exponentially. Clearly, this requires an evolution of the Department’s mission to secure critical systems controlling critical infrastructure, a goal we hope to accomplish through the legislation Chairman Lieberman and I have championed.

Despite the fact that DHS has made considerable strides over the past decade, it still has a long way to go. To understand what changes are needed for the future, and to prioritize our limited resources, we must learn from past mistakes and be able to better measure what has worked and what has not. To do so requires metrics and accountability, an area where the Department has been challenged.

I appreciate the outstanding experts who are here today to assist us in evaluating the Department’s progress and future.