

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Eddie Bernice Johnson
*Keeping America Secure: The Science Supporting
the Development of Threat Detection Technologies*
July 19, 2012

Thank you, Chairman Hall, for calling this hearing to examine terrorist threat detection technologies. Unfortunately, we live in a world where terrorist threats are growing and we have to be prepared to detect and respond to these threats.

I also want to thank our witnesses for being here today. We certainly appreciate all that you are doing to advance threat detection technology and to keep us safe from those who seek to do us harm. Without a doubt, there is a lot of good work going on in this area and you all should be commended for your part in that.

There is no denying, of course, that this sort of good work costs money. We are all painfully aware that, in recent years, Federal budgets have been tight and that funding has been constrained. I am interested in hearing today about how reduced or stagnant funding levels have hampered your terrorist threat detection activities, if at all.

I am also interested in learning what steps your agencies are taking to leverage the limited resources available to you for these activities. I am curious about how your threat detection research is prioritized – not only within your individual agency, but also across the Federal Government. I would also like to learn more about how you are partnering with non-Federal entities to ensure that the most promising and most impactful research is still being conducted and does not fall victim to the budget wars we are waging here in Congress.

I have had the opportunity to review your written testimony and am impressed by the technologies that have been developed in recent years. However, for our purposes today, I am most interested in learning about the challenges that remain, where we ought to be making future investments, and what this Committee can do to ensure that this new research is supported. The truth is that we must stay at least one step ahead of the terrorists and our threat detection research is our first line of defense.

I also understand that there are challenges to deterring terrorist threats that go beyond mere detection. We can have the best threat detection technologies imaginable, but our ability to thwart a terrorist attack rests on our capacity to interpret that threat and respond to it. I am interested in hearing about what is being done throughout the Federal Government to ensure that we respond appropriately when a threat is detected and how, if at all, your agencies are feeding into that process.

Finally, we cannot ignore the very important role that social and behavioral sciences play in helping to keep us safe from terrorist attacks.

We need to understand more than just the bomb or how to detect the bomb. We also need to understand the bomb maker. We need to understand not only what motivates someone to make or use that bomb, but also what specific groups and which specific individuals are most likely to make and attack us with that bomb. There is important social and behavioral science work going on in this

area, including at the Department of Homeland Security's Science and Technology Directorate, at the National Science Foundation, and through the federally-supported National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. I hope that we will have an opportunity to touch on this important research today.