

**The Honorable Robert Aderholt
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Opening Statement:**

FY 2013 Budget Request for Transportation Security Administration

Witnesses:

**Under Secretary for Management Rafael Borrás
Under Secretary for Science and Technology Dr. Tara O’Toole
10:00 AM | Wednesday | March 21, 2012 | B318 RHOB**

This morning we welcome before the Subcommittee Mr. Rafael Borrás, Under Secretary for Management for the Department of Homeland Security, and Dr. Tara O’Toole, Under Secretary for Science and Technology. Thank you both for being here.

Today we’ll take a closer look at two of the Department’s major construction projects – the planned new headquarters complex at the former St. Elizabeths site here in Washington, D.C., and the National Bio- and Agro-defense Facility, or (NBAF), in Manhattan, Kansas.

While the two sites are very different in geography, design, and mission, they share some key elements – both are complex and expensive undertakings with multi-year timelines.

These projects are also operating under significantly tighter budgets than anticipated when planning began several years ago.

The DHS footprint, which began with multiple legacy agency offices scattered throughout the National Capital Region, has grown and spread in the past decade. Part of the strategy to shrink and reduce the cost of this footprint is to build a large, consolidated headquarters for the Department.

This project involves transitioning roughly 14,000 people to a planned 4.5-million square-foot facility in Anacostia on the historic St. Elizabeths campus. The remaining 24,000 DHS personnel in the Capital Region would be concentrated at the current headquarters in Northwest DC and at the several component headquarters throughout the area.

After nearly a billion dollars into the project, the principal result will be the completion of a new Coast Guard headquarters, allowing the service to move out of its current home at Buzzard Point next year.

The overall DHS headquarters project was planned to conclude in 2016, with a total cost of approximately \$3.5 billion dollars. But with today’s budget constraints, we must take a more realistic look at this large capital investment project and balance delays against possible cost increases.

We will be very interested in hearing today how the Department intends to proceed with its consolidation effort.

In particular, we'd like to discuss whether the Department has looked at any flexible staffing models or creative use of existing office space to provide alternative solutions to a consolidated, co-located site.

Part of this discussion should touch on what minimum funding requirements must be met in order to justify proceeding with the project, and what responsible alternative pathways exist.

On another front, the National Bio- and Agro-defense Facility, or "NBAF," is to be built in Manhattan, Kansas on the campus of Kansas State University. This facility has been deemed by DHS to be a critical homeland security need in order to protect the Nation's food and livestock from the worst biological threats posed by animal and zoonotic diseases.

To date, funding has been applied to designs and plans for NBAF, as well as initial site preparation. However, \$90 million dollars in appropriated funds remain unused while a review is conducted of the of the recently revised risk assessment of the project.

Furthermore, the Administration is conducting a reassessment of the plans and scope of NBAF in light of funding shortfalls and delays in the schedule. We want to hear from you today, Under Secretary O'Toole, about this reassessment.

There seems to be little doubt that the country needs a laboratory that can develop vaccines and other countermeasures against these threats, a conclusion reached by the past two Administrations and endorsed by the National Academy of Sciences. The question is: how to proceed responsibly and at a reasonable pace given the large cost of this project?

I expect a good discussion today of the risks to our economy from bio- and agro-threats, and of the priority that this project should receive.

It is a challenge to undertake major capital investments while also trying to get our fiscal house in order. Under Secretary Borrás and Under Secretary O'Toole, I expect to hear from both of you today about how you plan to meet the Department's homeland security priorities while also making responsible public investment decisions.

###