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Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. David Price

"Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is tasked with wide ranging responsibilities. Your agency is critical to expediting legitimate travel and commerce in the United States, while at the same time policing our borders both at and between the ports of entry to prevent drugs, weapons, counterfeit goods, and illegal or dangerous individuals from coming in. All of these efforts involve targeting, screening, and inspecting persons of concern and cargo either overseas or once they reach our borders here in the United States.

"Each of you has a unique responsibility, made all the more important by the lack of a permanent Commissioner at CBP at the moment. Therefore each of you has an increased burden to provide effective oversight and leadership within your branch, as well as coordination throughout the Department. So I am pleased to welcome our panel of distinguished CBP witnesses to discuss their missions and priorities more in depth as they testify on their budget request.

"For fiscal year 2013, CBP is requesting \$10.4 billion. While it appears that CBP is getting a \$190 million increase (or 2 percent) above 2012, this is misleading. In an apples-to-apples comparison, after you remove the proposed US Visit transfer of \$261.5 million, CBP is slightly below last year's level. Like the rest of the federal government, you are being asked to do more with less, and your budget reflects your heavy reliance on human capital for all of your activities. To maintain your current staffing of 21,370 Border Patrol agents and 21,186 CBP officers, your request leaves few dollars remaining to invest in new assets and tools for your personnel however.

"While I support the decision to sustain frontline operations, I have serious concerns about cuts proposed elsewhere to achieve this goal. For example, this budget requests a 52 percent decrease in funding for Air and Marine procurements at a time when aging assets are already operating at reduced flight hours. The request will result in further reducing flight hours by approximately 40,000 fewer flight hours than just three years ago – a troubling decrease that his Committee must weigh the implications of. Couple this with the proposed \$7.1 million reduction in Air and Marine staff, and I have serious reservations about the ability of the Office of Air and

Marine to effectively carry out its mission.

"Elsewhere, the budget proposes an 18 percent reduction to Border Security Fencing, Infrastructure, and Technology, which seems reasonable recognizing that the border fence has been completed and the follow-on to SBI has been delayed. Also, significant cuts to mission support and information technology support may impact front line operations. This Committee allocated significant resources under my tenure as Chairman to provide adequate support staff to CBP, ensuring frontline personnel were not spending their time performing administrative functions behind a desk. This budget erases many of those gains.

"On the technology front, no one can deny that much of the equipment used by CBP at our Ports of Entry has reached, or will soon reach, its projected lifespan. That is precisely why the Recovery Act provided \$100 million for Non-Intrusive Inspection Systems. However, the budget proposes a \$31 million reduction for this technology, forcing the Department to rely on only currently fielded equipment. By deferring investment in equipment and technology today, the Department is only increasing the cost of these upgrades tomorrow.

"Gentleman, during this time of fiscal restraint, you have been asked to tighten your belt. In doing so, I question whether this budget is properly balanced in a way that maintains critical operations without robbing Peter to pay Paul. While I could belabor this point in more detail, Mr. Chairman, I have a lot of questions and suggest we get right to the testimony and questions."

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