

The Honorable John Carter
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. Customs and Border Protection FY 2014 Budget Hearing
Witnesses:
Acting Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan
Chief Michael Fisher (Border Patrol)
Assistant Commissioner Alles (Air and Marine)
10:00 AM | Wednesday | April 17, 2013 | 2359 RHOB
Opening Statement As Prepared

Hearing is called to order –

This morning we welcome witnesses from U.S. Customs and Border Protection (or, CBP), as we consider the President’s FY14 Budget Request to secure our borders and facilitate lawful travel and trade. They are: Acting Deputy Commissioner Kevin McAleenan; Chief Michael Fisher, Office of Border Patrol; and Assistant Commissioner Randolph Alles, Office of Air and Marine.

Gentlemen, we thank you for being here and look forward to your testimony. We also thank you for your service – and for representing the interests of thousands of frontline officers and agents who risk their lives every day in service to our nation.

The senseless and cowardly attack in Boston is a stark reminder that we must be ever vigilant in our efforts to secure the homeland – a reminder that I know is with your folks every day as they carry out their critical mission of border security.

The last two years have been marked by disingenuous budget requests and painstaking analysis by this Subcommittee – it was clear that CBP’s budget did not cover its personnel. It appears, upon our initial analysis, as though the FY14 request actually supports CBP’s baseline staffing levels – that includes 21,370 Border Patrol agents, 21,775 CBP officers, 1,138 Air and Marine Interdiction Agents, and 2,383 Agricultural Specialists.

However, the FY14 request also proposes to add 1,600 CBP officers through a down payment of \$210 million in appropriated funds and 1,877 CBP officers through an unauthorized fee proposal. CBP’s budget is now 72% salaries and benefits for its more than 60,000 personnel. Is now the right time to increase staffing when it is not clear that we are giving these officers and agents the right tools to do their important mission?

The request also assumes massive cuts to ICE and Coast Guard as well as the reductions to CBP Air and Marine operations. Would investment dollars be better spent to ensure CBP air assets are flying to support border security?

In FY12, Air and Marine supported Border Patrol, drug interdiction, and other missions with 81,000 flight hours – less than prior years.

Given the FY14 request, Air and Marine will only achieve 62,000 flight hours. Air and Marine needs the right mix of staffing, assets, and operational funds for fuel and routine maintenance to do its job. And it is clear this budget request does not support that need – Border Patrol and drug interdiction missions will be impacted.

However, CBP has not been particularly good at measuring the impact of budget tradeoffs on mission capabilities and performance. While I congratulate Field Operations on finally issuing the workload staffing model and developing detailed metrics and measures for its operations, the Border Patrol has not put forth similar measures. If immigration reform is to happen, we need to know the level of border security we can achieve with the right resource mix.

This Subcommittee faces tough choices in developing the FY14 appropriations bill. For that reason, we look forward to hearing from you on your mission needs. I would like to now recognize the Subcommittee's distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Price, for his opening remarks.

#####