

**Opening Statement  
Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings**

**Hearing on “U.S. Secret Service:  
Identifying Steps to Restore the Protective Agency”**

**February 12, 2015**

I want to start by thanking you, Mr. Chairman, for agreeing to hold today’s hearing and for working with us in a bipartisan way. You have sought our input and participation, and I believe our efforts will be more effective as a result.

**We are holding today’s hearing because the independent panel has done a thorough review of the Secret Service, and we want to hear directly from them before taking our next steps.** They met with more than 170 people from inside and outside the Secret Service, they made numerous recommendations, and now the upper managers of the agency have been removed.

**The Chairman and I both strongly agree that the independent panel’s work was excellent. We have also discussed the panel’s classified report, and we believe it was tough, thorough, and crucial to bringing about real change at the agency. We thank all four members of the panel for their dedication and service to our country.**

I want to make two key points today. **First, I completely agree with the panel that the question of leadership is most important.** Although the previous Director has left and top managers have been removed, the job is only half done. As the panel concluded, a strong group of new leaders must now be identified, and that responsibility rests with the Executive Branch.

**Second, I also agree with the panel that these changes “require strong leadership, but they will also require resources.”** And that is our job here in Congress. Their report makes clear that the Secret Service is stretched too thin. The status quo is long shifts, forced overtime, inadequate training, and too little rest.

I would like to read briefly from one report describing this problem. It says this:

“The strains are manifest throughout the agency. The service has been forced to pull firearms instructors from its training academy and uniformed officers guarding foreign missions to work protective details. ... The attrition has caused alarm. ‘It’s all smoke and mirrors,’ says a plainclothes agent. ‘We are like a giant ship teetering on toothpicks, waiting to collapse.’ Says another: ‘Our protective mission is in crisis.’”  
That was from a press report in 2002—more than a decade ago. Let me read another one:

“While the threat of terrorism looms large over the White House Complex, one of the most insidious threats to our national security actually comes from within. With the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and the fallout from the Hurricane Katrina disaster, the Secret Service overall has suffered much in terms of the budget, or

perhaps more appropriately, the lack thereof. We were informed last year that our budget had been cut and that the Secret Service was going to have to make some changes to cut costs and save money.”

That quote was from 2007. It was from a letter sent internally to the Secret Service leadership by a former Uniformed Division officer, and we have obtained a copy.

Last week, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association wrote to the Committee, saying this:

**“[A] lack of resources and funding is the core reason the agency has suffered its newsworthy deficits.** In moments of honesty, even media reports have restated what is well-known in the Service and was highlighted by the Protective Mission Review Panel—that the Secret Service has been overstretched and underfunded since the 9/11 attacks and continues to be.”

**Let me make one thing clear. I am not saying we should “throw money at the problem,” that more money is a “silver bullet,” that inadequate funding is an excuse for failure, or any other similar straw-man argument.**

**I am agreeing with the independent panel that the Secret Service has atrophied, it needs more funding, and it is our job in Congress to get it to them.**

The panel recommended—as a first step—adding 200 officers and 85 agents, and it said many more may be necessary once the new management team assesses the agency’s needs. We have heard from others inside and outside the Secret Service that they are down by at least 500 positions.

**The DHS funding bill would start to restore some of this funding, but unfortunately it is being held up by some Republicans who oppose the President’s actions on immigration. We have only two weeks left before the Department shuts down. If that happens, Secret Service employees will be required to continue working without pay.**

This is no way to treat Secret Service agents and officers—they should not be collateral damage in this political fight.

The fact is that federal workers across the board have been hammered over the past four years. They have sacrificed nearly \$140 billion as a result of a three-year pay freeze and pay cuts in the form of increased retirement contributions for newly-hired employees. They have endured sequestration cuts and furloughs and the elimination of jobs for the last three years in a row. It is time to recognize that these actions take a toll.

Finally, Mr. Chairman, I would like to take a moment to address our work here on the Committee. I completely agree that we must reform this agency. Its mission is too critical to ignore. I have the greatest admiration for this President, and the last thing I want is for

something to happen to him or his family. So I commit to working with you, to the best of my ability, and in good faith.

In return, I ask that we focus aggressively on the reforms that are needed, that we avoid spending valuable time re-investigating issues that others have already investigated, and that we continue working closely together—as we have been—to conduct our investigation in a responsible way that does no harm to the agency or its mission.

The independent panel recommends a sustained effort to reform the agency's leadership, budgeting process, administrative functions, and hiring systems. This type of oversight work may be tedious—and it may not get as many headlines as focusing on prostitutes in Colombia—but it is exactly what the agency needs to succeed.

The Secret Service has been a protective force without equal for the past 150 years. Every day, these hardworking men and women perform extremely difficult and critical jobs. So I want to close by saying thank you because they are not thanked enough. Thank you for your constant vigilance, your dedication, and your service to our nation.