



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Silent Weapons: Examining Foreign Anomalous Health Incidents Targeting Americans in the Homeland and Abroad

May 8, 2024

Today the Subcommittee on Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement, and Intelligence is meeting to examine anomalous health incidents affecting our U.S. government personnel – both abroad and here in the homeland.

Since 2016, U.S. officials have reported nearly 1,500 cases of anomalous health incidents or “Havana Syndrome.” Affected officials have reported physical symptoms that began while on official assignments not only in Havana, but in Germany, China, Colombia, and in Washington, DC – to name just a few locations. Since reports began in 2016, there have been several theories about the cause of the anomalous health incidents, including the possibility that symptoms could be the result of attacks by foreign adversaries.

In March 2023, the intelligence community concluded that it is “very unlikely” a foreign adversary is responsible for the reported AHIs. However – all intelligence community agencies, and I quote, “...agree that US personnel sincerely and honestly reported their experiences, including those that were painful or traumatic...” unquote.

A recent study by the National Institutes of Health, which analyzed MRI brain scans of the affected government officials, confirmed the very real symptoms of the affected participants. I am a firm believer in leaving no stone unturned, so it is imperative that the intelligence community and others continue to collect information and analyze any new evidence. We owe it to our public servants to not only continue providing care to affected employees, but also to scrutinize possible causes and remain vigilant against threats. I am confident that the Biden Administration will do just that.

In contrast to the Trump Administration, which was criticized by affected employees, the public, and bipartisan members of Congress for failing to take this issue seriously, the Biden Administration undertook a rigorous review of available information and implemented the “HAVANA Act” to ensure care and benefits for affected employees.

The Biden Administration has also stated it will direct continued studies into the potential causes of AHIs. Just a few days ago, the Director of National Intelligence testified that the intelligence community is continuing its investigation. I am glad to be having today’s conversation, and I look forward to hearing the witnesses’ testimony and recommendations for Congress.

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