



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

### ***Countering Threats Posed by Nation-State Actors in Latin America to U.S. Homeland Security***

**June 21, 2023**

I am grateful for Ranking Member Magaziner's leadership on this Subcommittee and his effort to put today's hearing into focus. It was Committee Democrats' understanding that the purpose of this hearing is to discuss foreign malign influence in Latin America and how the actions of our geopolitical adversaries in the region impact U.S. interests and homeland security. This is certainly an issue worth exploring.

However, the Republicans' media advisory for the hearing once again demonstrates that my colleagues across the aisle are focused on the southern border to the exclusion of other critical homeland security matters. According to the media advisory, the focal point of today's hearing for Republicans is Border Patrol's, and I quote, "encounters with individuals from authoritarian countries hostile to the United States, such as China, Russia, Cuba, and Venezuela," unquote.

It goes on to note that Republicans are unaware of the migrants' motives for seeking entry into the U.S. but does not mention using today's hearing to explore the root causes of migration. Perhaps because Republicans are uninterested in finding solutions and want to further their partisan agenda against Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas – a case that they have stated is already quote, "closed," unquote.

It is high time that this Committee start doing oversight of pressing issues, like foreign malign influence in Latin America and how the actions of China, Russia, and others in our backyard undermine U.S. interests and democracy at large. I – once again – urge my Republican colleagues to forgo trying to score political points and join Democrats in seeking real solutions to threats to the homeland.

At the Subcommittee's March 9 and May 23 hearings, Chairman Pfluger stated, and I quote, "This conflict is not with individual citizens of the PRC—this conflict is with the CCP, an authoritarian regime that commits genocide against its own people, censors free speech across the globe, and aims to end democracy as we know it." I could not agree more. Today, we ought to be examining the activities of malign nation-state actors in Latin America and the subsequent risks to the homeland, not vilifying individuals fleeing autocratic and oppressive regimes.

The Biden Administration's National Security Strategy notes that the "Western Hemisphere impacts the United States more than any other region." It also recognizes the need for the U.S. to deepen partnerships with Latin American Countries "to advance economic resilience, democratic stability, and citizen security," and to protect against external interference or coercion, including from China, Russia, and Iran.

So, I am thankful that under Ranking Member Magaziner's leadership, Committee Democrats will use today's hearing to learn from witnesses about the scope of foreign malign influence in Latin America and how the United States government can best work to help our allies deter such efforts.

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