



COMMITTEE *ON* HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

The Future of Homeland Security: Addressing the Rise of Terrorism in Africa

September 27, 2023

Terrorism in Africa has increased markedly, with violence in at least 22 countries on the continent, including several that had no history of extremism prior to 2001, such as Mozambique and Burkina Faso. While terrorist activity fell during the early 2000s, over the past decade, fatalities caused by terrorist groups in Africa have increased almost three-fold.

The U.S. Defense Department's Africa Center for Strategic Studies assesses that total fatalities in Africa linked to terrorist groups surged by nearly 50% from 2021 to 2022, with over 19,000 deaths reported. Africa has also seen the greatest growth in the number of ISIS affiliates. National security experts have called the continent "the new epicenter for international terrorism." My hope is that in today's hearing, we explore why.

After decades of counterterrorism and counterinsurgency measures, it is troubling that groups like al-Qaeda, ISIS, and their affiliates continue to pop up in African countries. I also hope we begin to re-examine our approach to combatting international terrorist groups in Africa and across the globe, since it is clear that the perverse ideology espoused by ISIS and al Qaeda and their commitment to violence and murder persists.

Although the groups operating in Africa threaten mostly local or regional targets – no matter where these terrorist groups are focused, we must remain vigilant in guarding against their ability to cause devastation to our allies and our interests both at home and abroad. And while currently there is no credible, imminent threat to the U.S. homeland from Africa – we all know ISIS, al-Qaeda, and their offshoots desire to attack the United States.

In the 22 years since 9/11, our homeland security, intelligence, law enforcement, and military personnel have worked tirelessly to degrade these groups and destroy their networks. The fact that September 11, 2001, was the last complex foreign terrorist attack on U.S. soil is a testament to this work – and it is essential that we resource and empower our national security personnel to keep the pressure on, especially in Africa. To that point, I would be remiss if I did not address the elephant in the room – the impending government shutdown.

Today, we will be receiving testimony urging Congress to support Federal agencies' critical work to track evolving threats in Africa and collaborate with partner nations to build layered defenses. That cannot happen if the government goes unfunded. Today's hearing is important, but words must be backed up with action – and necessary funding.

I hope that after we receive this testimony, extreme MAGA Republicans will end their destructive attempt to shut down the government. Only then can we assure the American people that Congress is dedicated to countering terrorism threats wherever they arise and keeping such threats far away from our shores.

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