



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Examining the Current Status of Iran's Axis of Resistance and the Implications for Homeland Security and U.S. Interests

March 20, 2024

It has been more than five months since the horrific terrorist attack by Iranian-backed Hamas against Israel, which left more than 1,100 people dead. Still today, Hamas is holding an estimated 130 Israelis—including dual-U.S. citizens—hostage. That deadly October 7 attack caused a war that has claimed tens of thousands of lives—including innocent civilians and children both in Israel and Gaza.

Beyond the war in Gaza, Hamas' deadly attack has begun to spill over and destabilize regional peace and global economic security. We have seen Lebanese Hizballah—also backed by the Iranian regime—launch attacks against Israel since October 7, killing a dozen Israeli soldiers and six civilians. And just a few days ago, it was publicly reported that the head of Iran's Quds Force met with Lebanese Hizballah, and Hizballah's leader told the Iranian regime that the terrorist group is willing to fight Israel on its own, without pulling in Iranian armed forces. That should trouble us all.

Moreover, Houthis in Yemen have repeatedly attacked commercial shipping, demonstrating how the United States and our allies are threatened by Iranian-backed terrorist groups. The Houthis have also claimed responsibility for attacking the U.S. Navy. While the claim has been refuted by U.S. defense officials, it sheds light on the group's terrorism-related aspirations.

Today's hearing is an opportunity for the Committee to hear from national security agencies in a closed setting about the threat Iranian-backed terrorist groups like Hamas, Hizballah, and the Houthis pose to the homeland and to U.S. interests worldwide. As I said in the immediate aftermath of the heinous attacks on October 7, the United States condemns Hamas' actions. We also keep the innocent civilians in Gaza who have died in our prayers and call for lasting peace in the region.

Unfortunately, as the Administration has worked tirelessly to support Israel, bring Americans home from the conflict zone, prevent a wider war in the region, and address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, House Republicans have absolutely refused to provide Israel with the resources they need to push back the threat of terrorists and terroristic regimes. Republican leaders are also refusing to work with Democrats to provide humanitarian relief for civilians in Gaza.

Now, while I am pleased that an apparent deal has been reached to fund the government, it is shameful that more than five months into fiscal year 2024, House Republicans' refusal to govern has us once again on the precipice of a partial government shutdown. If House Republicans do not put politics aside and pass the agreed-upon spending package, all four of the witnesses testifying before us today are facing the shuttering of their agencies. This is a do-nothing Republican Majority.

Although I am glad that we have an opportunity today to better understand the current threat posed by Iranian-backed terrorist groups, I have zero faith that my Republican colleagues will actually do anything meaningful about it when they leave this room. Even Republican Members have acknowledged how

dysfunctional Congress has become under their own party's leadership. I cannot believe I am agreeing with Congressman Andy Biggs, but I agree with his characterization of this Republican Majority— "It's embarrassing".

Republican dysfunction is a threat to peace and stability around the world because under their so-called leadership, Congress cannot even come to the aid of its allies. There is much to be done, as Iran and other adversaries like Russia, North Korea, and China continue to be a threat to the United States.

I hope that today's hearing – particularly as we are receiving information in a classified setting – will serve as a turning point. I hope that Republicans will get serious about addressing the threats this country faces. It is time that we finally focus our energy on helping Israel, and other allies, stand against evil. And we must help provide much-needed humanitarian aid to Palestinian civilians.

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