



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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

***An Examination of the Iranian Regime's Threats to Homeland Security***

**October 25, 2023**

As we begin today's hearing on Iran's threats to our homeland, I want to express my deepest condolences in the wake of the horrific terrorist attacks in Israel.

On October 7, Hamas, a proxy of the Iranian regime, tragically slaughtered more than 1,400 men, women, and children — including at least 30 Americans. We pray for them and their loved ones. We also pray for the innocent civilians who have died in Gaza and are mindful of the humanitarian crisis there. As I said in the immediate aftermath of the heinous attacks, the United States condemns Hamas' actions and stands in total solidarity with Israel against terror.

Since the attacks, President Biden and his Administration have shown true leadership, not just with words but with action, demonstrating ironclad support for Israel. The President has deployed two aircraft carrier groups to the eastern Mediterranean and sent Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin and Secretary of State Antony Blinken to the region to signal strong support for Israel's security and engage in critical diplomacy. The President, himself, traveled to Israel to reaffirm the United States' commitment to Israel's security. He has also made clear he has no higher priority than getting back the Americans who went missing in the attacks.

Unfortunately, as the Biden Administration has worked 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 been AWOL. Because of their failure to elect a Speaker for the last 22 days, the House has been unable to conduct any legislative business. We haven't even been able to pass a bipartisan resolution support of Israel — of which I am a cosponsor — authored by Mr. McCaul and the Ranking Member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Mr. Meeks.

Some of my colleagues on the other side have acknowledged this extraordinarily troubling situation. The former Chairman of this Committee, Mr. McCaul, who currently chairs the Committee on Foreign Affairs, recently said, and I quote:

*"I look at the world and all the threats that are out there, and what kind of message are we sending to our adversaries when we can't govern, when we're dysfunctional, when we don't even have a Speaker of the House."*

I agree with Mr. McCaul — he is correct about Republican dysfunction and the message it sends to our adversaries around the world.

Unfortunately, Republicans are trying to deflect attention from their own infighting by criticizing the Biden Administration. For example, we have heard misleading statements about the Administration giving Iran access to \$6 billion in Iranian assets currently held in Qatari accounts.

The truth is, not a penny of that money has been released, and the Biden Administration and the Qatari government have agreed to block Iran from accessing it. Republicans are also engaging in fearmongering about Hamas-affiliated individuals at our southwest border. The truth is, CBP has confirmed it has no indication of Hamas-directed foreign fighters trying to enter the United States.

I hope that congressional Republicans will stop their politically motivated criticism of the Administration and instead focus their energy on electing a Speaker, so the House can pass legislation to help the people of Israel and strengthen U.S. national security. There is much to be done, as Iran and other adversaries like Russia, North Korea, and China continue to pose serious threats to the United States.

As we examine Iran's threats to the homeland today, I am concerned about targeted terror attacks from Iran and its proxies, like Hamas and Hizballah. Terrorism-related concerns about Iran are well-founded. According to the U.S. State Department, Iran is the largest state sponsor of terrorism. The Iranian regime has been implicated in assassinations, terrorist plots, and terrorist attacks in more than 40 countries since 1979 — including several plots or attempted attacks in the U.S. against Americans.

I am also concerned about the Iranian regime's cyber threat to the homeland. According to the U.S. Intelligence Community's 2023 Annual Threat Assessment, and I quote:

*"Iran's growing expertise and willingness to conduct aggressive cyber operations make it a major threat to the security of U.S. and allied networks and data."*

I am particularly concerned about Iran's opportunistic approach to cyber-attacks and whether U.S. critical infrastructure is susceptible for targeting by the regime.

To discuss these issues today, I am grateful we have Mr. Thomas Warrick on the witness panel. Mr. Warrick has 40 years of experience addressing threats from Iran, including more than a decade at the Department of Homeland Security dedicated to counterterrorism efforts. I look forward to hearing his assessment of the most significant threats to the homeland from Iran and the steps Congress should take to address those threats. I thank the entire panel for joining us today.

In closing, I want to say that I hope Republicans can overcome their chaos and dysfunction so we can return to regular order and resume the work the American people sent us here to do. It's long overdue.

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