



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Examining the Threat from ISIS and Al Qaeda

June 24, 2020

Today's hearing provides an opportunity to assess the current threat from Al Qaeda and ISIS. As we approach the 19th anniversary of the September 11th attacks, we must remain vigilant. ISIS remains a significant threat even as its ability to control physical territory is severely limited. And although Al Qaeda may be more dispersed, it is far from defeated.

Recently, we have been reminded of the ability of ISIS and Al Qaeda to inspire and even direct attacks against the homeland and U.S. interests abroad. Acts of terrorism within our borders — like in Pensacola, Florida and Corpus Christi, Texas — show that our oversight and focus remain critical. These attacks in particular targeted the men and women of our military.

We must do everything we can to prevent future attacks in the United States—especially on military bases. In cases like the Pensacola attack, which was apparently linked to Al Qaeda, this must include improved information sharing and reforming inadequate vetting procedures among government agencies. But the threats we face are not just to our men and women in uniform— our communities continue to face the threat of violence fueled by propaganda from ISIS and Al Qaeda.

That is one of the reasons I introduced H.R. 2476, the Securing American Nonprofit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2019, and was especially proud to see it become law. The program provides grants to nonprofits and faith-based organizations in both urban and rural areas to help secure their facilities against a potential terrorist attack. The new law authorizes the grant program for years to come.

This is also an important time to note that DHS has been without a permanent Secretary for well over a year now. To plan for the future of the Department and stay one step ahead of the terrorism threats of today and tomorrow, the American people need a permanent Secretary. Counterterrorism involves a concerted effort that requires consistency, vision, and leadership from a confirmed Secretary.

Before I conclude, I would be remiss if I did not mention that the Committee's oversight efforts on extremism will continue despite the current Administration's lack of effective partnership in providing documents and briefings in a timely manner. One of our greatest successes since September 11th has been acknowledging and addressing the need to share information between the various government Departments and Agencies. I hope that the Administration reevaluates their current strategy and chooses to work with Congress, including ensuring that policymakers are being informed of the most up-to-date threats.

With that being said, I look forward to a frank conversation with the experts here today about the effectiveness of the current strategy and policies aimed to combat ISIS and Al Qaeda. Specifically, I hope we can shed light on emerging trends and identify new tools, policies, and procedures to combat terrorist actors at home and abroad, while upholding our American values.

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