



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

*Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Hearing Statement of Counterterrorism, Law Enforcement & Intelligence Subcommittee Ranking Member Seth Magaziner (D-RI)**

### ***Republican Afghanistan Hearing***

**April 18, 2023**

As Members of the Homeland Security Committee, we have a duty to protect the United States homeland and the people who live here from all threats, foreign and domestic.

I speak for all Members of this Subcommittee that we honor the sacrifices and dedication of all who served in Afghanistan, including some of the witnesses here today.

The American veterans of the Afghanistan War who I speak with have a range of opinions on the decision to withdraw.

But I want every American who served in Afghanistan to know that you made a positive difference. Thanks to you, AQ and ISIS are operating at a fraction of their prior strength, the masterminds behind 9/11 and other heinous attacks have been brought to justice, countless other attacks have been prevented, lives have been saved, and our nation is safer than it was in 2001.

Now that the War is over, we must continue to be proactive in ensuring that terrorist organizations in Afghanistan never develop the capacity to threaten the American homeland again.

We must maintain the diplomatic, intelligence, and military capability to respond to threats emanating from Afghanistan whenever necessary.

It is vital that terrorist organizations like AQ and ISIS, which have been diminished due to the sacrifice of American service members, our NATO allies, and other partners, never regain the capability to launch a large-scale attack on the US homeland.

We must also focus on the fact that many terror groups have begun using the internet to systematically radicalize individuals already living in the United States. This is a real threat that has already cost American lives and must be taken seriously.

We must learn from the withdrawal and ensure that in the future when the US exits foreign theater, we do so with adequate planning for all contingencies, including ensuring that the Department of Homeland Security has the planning, the resources, and the data that it needs from other agencies to efficiently and accurately screen those seeking asylum.

When President Biden took office, the American force in Afghanistan had already been reduced by more than 80% from the day the Trump Taliban Deal was signed, down to only 2,500 troops. When President

Biden took office, the Taliban already controlled a large portion of the country's 407 districts. And 5,000 Taliban fighters had already been released.

The security of Americans cannot be a partisan issue. My Democratic colleagues and I take our responsibility on this Committee seriously and undertake our oversight with solemnity.

My hope for today's hearing is that we will focus on forward-looking solutions that will improve the safety of Americans at home and around the world and examine how the Trump-Taliban deal led to a chaotic withdrawal.

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