

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****The Rising Terrorist Threat and the Unfulfilled 9/11 Recommendation***

July 23, 2014 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The Rising Terrorist Threat and the Unfulfilled 9/11 Recommendation”:

“Ten years ago, the “National Commission on Terrorist Attacks in the United States” issued the official account of the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001. In that report, the 9/11 Commission made a series of recommendations to strengthen our counterterrorism efforts, foster information sharing beyond traditional boundaries, and strengthen congressional oversight to improve the effectiveness of homeland security measures.

While the “Implementing 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act” addressed many of these recommendations, challenges still remain. From the outset, the 9/11 Commission was tasked to make recommendations to prevent another terrorist attack. In the 10 years since the report’s release, we have seen the terrorist threat change. The top leadership for Al Qaeda, the group that claimed responsibility for the 9/11 attacks, has been dismantled by the Obama Administration. Although Al Qaeda has been weakened exponentially, we remain vigilant about persistent and emerging threats. We must closely monitor the capabilities of al Qaeda’s affiliates who are thriving in unstable areas such as Iraq and Syria. Though many of these groups’ aspirations are localized to the countries in which they operate, they do espouse anti-American views that are concerning.

We also must not turn a blind eye to the threat of lone wolf actors in the United States. Some of these people are inspired by Al Qaeda and domestic anti-government and hate groups. For counterterrorism efforts to succeed, we need to do a better job of sharing information. That is the message from the 9/11 commissioners a decade ago and that is their message today. Last year’s Boston Marathon Bombing reemphasized the need for improvements in information sharing between both Federal agencies and State and local authorities.

The continued evolution and escalation of Al Qaeda and its affiliates abroad also underscores the need for strong intelligence and information partnerships with our foreign allies. I fear that some of our key relationships have been tested by high-profile leaks about NSA programs and other counterterrorism efforts. More needs to be done to fortify key information sharing relationships.

Also, I appreciate that the Bipartisan Policy Committee has highlighted cybersecurity as an area of concern. As we become more dependent on technology, opportunities for cyberterrorism increase rapidly. Today, hostile nations, criminal groups, and individuals seek to exploit information networks to further a variety of individual, national, and ideological objectives. I have been a major proponent of DHS’ efforts to foster cyber hygiene and timely information sharing, particularly among critical infrastructure owners and operators.

Though I know it is directly related to today’s proceedings, I do want to express, on the record, my hope that bipartisan cybersecurity legislation that was approved by the Committee in February will be considered by the House before August. We need to do more to create an environment of vigilance that gives Americans confidence that their personal data is private and secure, and allow the government to ensure the integrity of its information while identifying and prosecuting

cybercriminals when possible.

Further, as the Bipartisan Policy Committee also notes in its report, the House, under both Democratic and Republican majorities, has failed to consolidate authorizing and oversight jurisdiction for each component of the Department of Homeland Security into one congressional committee. I agree with the 9/11 Commissioners that the fragmented oversight detracts from the Department's national security mission. We have seen it time and again.

I am sure the Chairman would agree that this Committee should be the authorizing and oversight Committee of the Department of Homeland Security, but that comes with a price. That price is asserting jurisdiction. It is disappointing that with eight voting weeks left this Congress, this Committee is on track to receive its lowest number of referrals since its inception. Looking forward, as we continue to strengthen the Department of Homeland Security, we must not forget the terrorist threat, but recognize it is evolving.

Information sharing must be strengthened and we must foster greater cybersecurity protections, particularly on the networks that are the backbone for critical infrastructure. I look forward to working in a bipartisan manner to fulfill these 9/11 recommendations.”

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