

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Beyond Bin Laden's Caves and Couriers to A New Generation of Terrorists: Confronting the Challenges in a Post 9/11 World***

September 8, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee field hearing entitled “Beyond Bin Laden's Caves and Couriers to A New Generation of Terrorists: Confronting the Challenges in a Post 9/11 World”:

“Director Greenwald, thank you for hosting today’s hearing at the 9/11 Memorial Museum. The Museum serves a living tribute to those who lost their lives in the terrorist attacks and provides a daily education to future generations. We are fortunate to have an exceptionally accomplished panel before the Committee today.

Mayor Giuliani, I want thank you for joining us today and reflecting on your leadership during one of New York City’s most difficult times. Commissioner Nigro, you became chief of the Fire Department in the days following the 9/11 attacks. At that time, you led an organization that lost over 300 of its firefighters in the terrorist attack. I thank you for your service and look forward to hearing your testimony.

Commissioner Bratton, I also thank you for your service. Police officers are the boots on the ground that we need to prevent terrorist attacks. As the nature of the terrorist attack has evolved since 9/11, I look forward to hearing your perspective on this evolution. Mr. Ielpi, we will never forget the over 3,000 people who lost their lives on September 11. Thank you for appearing today.

Mr. Thomas, during the September 11 attacks you were Executive Director of School Safety for New York City Schools. As the person in charge of evacuation and coordination on that day, I want to hear the lessons learned and your insight on how coordination has improved since 9/11.

In the fourteen years since September 11, America, particularly New York City, has shown its resilience and its resolve. As we continue to honor those who perished aboard the hijacked planes on September 11 and those who sacrificed their lives trying to save others, we must not allow ourselves to be distracted by fear or guided by anger.

Rather, we must remain steadfast and determined in our efforts to thwart future attacks and ensure that our first responders have the training and support to do their jobs better and safer. To do that, we cannot allow certain religious groups to be unjustifiably targeted by law enforcement and we cannot surrender the very civil liberties that make this country great. Instead, we must work hard to identify potential bad actors within the legal constructs of the Constitution.

Since 9/11, state and local law enforcement have been looked to as the first preventers in preventing terrorism. The 9/11 Commissioners recommended that we stop stovepiping information and increase information sharing among federal, state, and local authorities.

While increased information sharing is still necessary and gaps still exist, it has been proven that information sharing and coordination between the federal, state, and local authorities have been

helpful in preventing terrorist attacks.

In the fourteen years since September 11, there have been at least 16 foiled terrorist plots targeted at New York City. Some of these plots have been foiled by the cooperation between the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Joint Terrorism Task Force, and the New York City Police Department. Increased police presence and sophisticated counterterrorism unit—which are funded in part by federal dollars have also been helpful in foiling terrorist plots in New York City.

Even though we recognize the importance of federal funding to New York City and other jurisdictions, it is unfortunate that Congress continues to play chicken with the Federal appropriations process, which delays much needed resources to State and local governments and first responders to build robust preparedness and response capabilities. This is unnecessary and should stop.

Instead, we should return to normal order so that States and first responder organizations can reliably plan for future training, exercises, and equipment investments. We cannot become complacent in our support of first responders. First responders have made significant progress in addressing challenges identified by the 9/11 Commission; maintaining and building upon that progress takes continued Federal support.

We cannot be complacent in fully implementing the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission. To this day, Congress has still failed to consolidate jurisdiction of the Federal homeland security mission under one Committee. I hope that the Chairman will renew his effort to address this very important issue when we return to Washington this week.

I want to close by acknowledging and honoring those who died as a result of the September 11 attacks, or who are sick today because of their heroic actions 14 years ago. Words cannot fully convey our sorrow for your loss or our gratitude for the sacrifices and bravery of so many first responders, but through action, we will try.

The James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Reauthorization Act would extend the authorization of programs critical to ensuring that first responders with 9/11-related illnesses get the care that they need and deserve and have access to compensation for associated economic losses. We will work to ensure that this bill is enacted into law.”

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