

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson***The Future of Iranian Terror and Its Threat to the US Homeland*

February 11, 2016 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee hearing entitled “The Future of Iranian Terror and Its Threat to the US Homeland”:

“Iran poses one of the most complex foreign policy and national security challenges of the modern era. In 1984, the U.S. State Department listed Iran as a state sponsor of terrorism. According to the State Department, Iran provides funding, weapons, training, and sanctuary to numerous terrorist groups, most notably in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Lebanon, constituting a security concern to both the domestic and the international community.

According to experts, Hezbollah essentially still serves as a proxy military force for Iran. Hezbollah receives financial and material support from Iran and Syria, and its armed forces possess significant military and unconventional warfare capabilities that rival and in some cases exceed those of surrounding countries’ armed forces and police. In addition to discussing Hezbollah today, I expect a comprehensive debate of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, informally known as the Iran Nuclear Deal.

After thorough consideration, I supported the Iran Nuclear Deal. I recognize that like all multifaceted and varied agreements, there are drawbacks to the Iran Nuclear Deal. However, as I stated in September and continue to believe today, the Deal will improve the security of our country and our allies and will curtail Iran’s nuclear program. As a protective measure, some U.S. sanctions will remain in place under the Deal.

The Nuclear Deal does not require the United States to suspend sanctions on Iran’s support for terrorism, its human rights abuses, nor worldwide arms and WMD-related technology to Iran. Most importantly, the Deal does not require the United States to remove or to reconsider Iran’s designation as a state sponsor of terrorism, and all sanctions triggered by that designation will remain in place.

These provisions and the United States’ refusal to negotiate them are proof that this remains a national security issue of utmost importance. Mistrust and tension between the governments of the United States and Iran has existed for decades and there have been periods of alliance and periods of contention. With the signing of the Iran Nuclear Deal, an examination of a way forward with Iran makes sense and is timely.

However, we should not submit to scare tactics or political grandstanding. Instead, we should ensure that this discussion is fact-based and accurate given our threat intelligence, not speculation, and focused on sensible solutions.”

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