



COMMITTEE ON
**HOMELAND
SECURITY**
DEMOCRATS

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, *Ranking member*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Terrorism in North Africa: An Examination of the Threat
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

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Today, as we gather in a showing of our democratic process, the progress of democracy continues in North Africa. These democratic strides are making it more difficult for terrorist groups to operate and recruit in the region. In the more than six years since the Arab Spring brought demonstrations, protests, and civil wars to North Africa and the Middle East, our nation's primary interest remains engaging with civilian and military partnerships to counter extremism and terrorism in North Africa. Our efforts and successes in the region have not gone without issue, as civilians have, unfortunately, been killed as we have worked to eliminate terrorist organizations and their leadership.

Unfortunately, President Trump has proposed to cut Department of State international affairs funding by nearly one third next year in the areas of development and diplomacy. This budget proposal undermines U.S. leadership and partnerships across the globe, including the programs and developments across North Africa we are here to discuss. Adequate funding to the State Department remains critical to protect the U.S. and U.S. interests abroad. Further, any public debate that does not acknowledge these cuts and the devastation the lack of funding will create for the U.S. abroad is negligent, at best.

Today, there will be a lot of debate about ongoing gains and expansion of the Islamic State and their operations in North Africa. However, I would encourage us to also remember that other terrorist groups and their affiliates remain active in the region, specifically in the countries of Algeria, Tunisia, and Libya. Al Qaeda and its affiliate groups and defector groups are intent on reminding us through their terrorist acts that they exist and pose a threat to the United States. All of these groups, no matter how different their ideologies and terrorist methods have the same end goals, and that is to spread fear, terror, and violence throughout the world.

Unfortunately, President Trump and members of his administration's continuous anti-Muslim rhetoric and Muslim travel ban serve as props that feed into the terrorist propaganda, which may help with recruitment for groups like the Islamic State and Al Qaeda affiliates. Therefore, I will warn, as I have before, the words and policies this administration uses and promotes have the ability to empower and embolden individuals to commit acts of terror here in the United States, against U.S. interests abroad, and in our partner and ally countries.

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