

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Worldwide Threats to the Homeland***

October 21, 2015 (WASHINGTON) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Worldwide Threats to the Homeland”:

“While I agree that the threats to this nation are of concern and should be examined, I also believe that as the authorizing Committee of the Department of Homeland Security, it is our responsibility to hear from the Secretary about the overall management of DHS. This Committee, through its bipartisan work, the Government Accountability Office, and the Inspector General have all identified challenges within the Department.

Additionally, there are components within the Department that have proposed restructuring, the Secretary’s Unity of Effort initiative has made strides since the beginning of the Congress, and the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey still indicates that DHS has a long way to go in improving the morale of its workforce.

Furthermore, two DHS components with a zero fail mission—the Transportation Security Administration and the Secret Service—are undergoing much needed reform, and the Department’s cyber mission is critical as we look to prevent crippling attacks from cyber terrorists abroad. And while we have heard from several DHS officials this Congress, we have yet to hear from the head of the agency on the record about how he is fulfilling his vision for the Department and what he needs from Congress.

Today’s hearing topic and testimony does not provide for hearing from the Secretary on the topics I have mentioned. Therefore, I am asking you for a commitment to hold a hearing on the oversight of the Department of Homeland Security and invite Secretary Johnson to testify before the end of the first session of this Congress. I know the success of the Department of Homeland Security is a shared concern. Each member of this Committee should have the opportunity to question the Secretary in an open setting and to continue to hold him accountable.

Today’s hearing on worldwide threats gives the Committee the opportunity to hear the perspective of top government officials on the wide ranging threat of terrorism from both international groups and domestic terrorists. Through its oversight, this Committee has given much needed attention to the threat international terror organizations including Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and the threat from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant.

The Committee’s bipartisan task force looked at the threat from foreign fighters and one of their glaring, yet unsurprising findings is that there are still intelligence and information sharing gaps that need to be addressed. Those gaps also enter the conversation as we continue our efforts to address our humanitarian response to the refugee crisis in Syria.

I want to hear from each of the witnesses more about their agencies’ intelligence capabilities and how the interagency is working together as we prepare to assist in this humanitarian crisis. As Members of Congress, we have a responsibility to have accurate information before we begin to spread our own propaganda to our constituents and to the media. As we rightfully continue to address the threats from international terrorist organizations, I want to reemphasize that we should

not lose sight of the threats posed by terrorists that are right here in America. There are those that have no plans on traveling overseas to receive training from any international group.

Through social media networks, ISIL has encouraged lone offenders to perpetrate violence right here on our soil. This approach is not novel. Not only does ISIL use social media to encourage lone offenders, but right wing domestic terror groups also use social media to recruit and communicate. Once again illustrating that violent extremist views know no single ideology and recruitment tactics can mirror.

Even though some federal officials have been dismissive of domestic terrorism and others generate false intelligence to the contrary, the facts are clear—since September 11, more people in the United States have died in attacks by domestic extremists than attacks associated with international terrorist groups. According to a survey conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum and the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, law enforcement places threats from right wing terrorists as one of the top three terror threats in their jurisdiction.

We often discuss what the 9/11 Commissioners called failure of imagination. As we use today to discuss the threats to our country, let us not fail to imagine the devastation that can be caused by extremists both abroad and in our back yards.”

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