



**One Hundred Fourteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515**

June 17, 2016

The Honorable Michael McCaul
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176 Ford House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman McCaul:

Today, on the one-year anniversary of the deadly, domestic terrorist attack on congregants of the historic Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, I am writing to request that the Committee hold hearings on the threat of domestic terrorism.

According to the Committee on Homeland Security's Oversight plan for the 114th Congress, the Committee will "examine existing and emerging terror threats from domestic terrorists."¹ Over the last year, I have repeatedly requested that you convene a domestic terrorism hearing. On June 23, 2015, days after the Charleston attacks, I sent you a letter requesting a hearing with federal government officials on the threat of domestic terrorist organizations. More than a year later, you have not scheduled such a hearing.

You acknowledged in July 2015 that the violent extremist ideology that motivated the attack on Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church was of concern by saying, "[a]s we've seen recently in France, Tunisia, Kuwait, and even right here at home in places like Garland, TX, and Charleston, SC, violent extremism comes in many forms."² Since that time, I have been disappointed to see that those words have not translated into action and that you have not prioritized a hearing on domestic terrorist threats. However, you have convened five hearings since June 2015 examining the threats posed by foreign terrorist organizations.³

¹ Oversight Plan of the Committee on Homeland Security. 114th Congress (2015).

² House Committee on Homeland Security website, Majority Staff, <https://homeland.house.gov/press/mccaual-leads-government-efforts-counter-violent-extremism/> (last visited June 17, 2016).

³ Full Committee hearing, "Rise of Radicalization: Is the U.S. Government Failing to Counter International and Domestic Terrorism." (July 2015); Full Committee hearing, "Beyond Bin Laden's Caves and Couriers

On June 9, Speaker Paul Ryan released the House Republican agenda and ideas on national security. One of the ideas articulated is that, “we must make sure our country is ready to tackle the threats of our time and beyond.”⁴ Domestic terrorism is a threat of our time and beyond. As we remember Charleston today, details continue to emerge about a British lawmaker who was gunned down by someone that is believed to have been radicalized by a U.S. domestic extremist group. Additionally, over the past year, anti-government groups grew by one-third, and the violent threat they pose was underscored by a 41-day armed occupation by anti-government extremists Oregon earlier this year.

This Committee’s failure to examine the events of June 2015 terrorist attacks is not only a dereliction of our responsibilities in the House to tackle all homeland security matters but also inconsistent with the terms of our Committee-approved oversight plan. It is well known that this Committee has held timely hearings in the aftermath of terrorist attacks. Last year, within a month of the Garland, Texas attack, you convened a hearing to “examine the increasing threat from violent Islamist extremists groups.”⁵ Understandably, you also are planning to hold a hearing in July to examine the circumstances surrounding the June 2016 Orlando, Florida terrorist attack. However, there has not been a single hearing to examine any of the events, methods, or threats posed by the domestic terrorist that attacked Charleston or the domestic terrorists that occupied the Malheur refuge in Oregon.

Yesterday, I was appalled to hear you say on the House floor during debate of H.R. 5471, “What keeps me up at night? Boston, Chattanooga, San Bernardino, and now Orlando.”⁶ The victims of Charleston do not deserve to be omitted from such a list, and the attack that caused their demise must be on the agenda of this Committee.

I look forward to your timely attention and response to this matter. If you have any further questions please contact Hope Goins, Chief Counsel for Oversight, at 6-2616.

Sincerely,



BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member

to A New Generation of Terrorists: Confronting the Challenges in a Post 9/11 World.” (September 2015); Full Committee hearing, “Worldwide Threats and Homeland Security Challenges.” (October 2015); Full Committee hearing, “The Rise of Radicalism: Growing Terrorist Sanctuaries and the Threat to the U.S. Homeland.” (November 2015); Full Committee hearing, “DHS in Today’s Dangerous World: Examining the Department’s Budget and Readiness to Counter Homeland Threats.” (March 2016).

⁴ www.abetterway.speaker.gov (Last Visited June 16, 2016).

⁵ House Committee on Homeland Security website, Majority Staff, <https://homeland.house.gov/press/hearing-terrorism-gone-viral/> (Last visited June 16, 2016).

⁶ Representative McCaul (TX). “Countering Terrorist Radicalization Act.” (June 15, 2016) Available from: <http://www.c-span.org/video/?411263-1/us-house-debates-defense-appropriations-bill>. Assessed 6/17/16.