

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland – Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula***

March 2, 2011 (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 “Terrorist Threat to the U.S. Homeland – Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP)”:

“Democracy is on the march in North Africa and the Middle East. While the risk of terrorists exploiting the instability is real, the possibilities for good are endless. Yemen is one of the places that has seen its share of unrest, which continues to make it ripe for Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) to thrive.

Within the last couple of years, AQAP has supported two major attempted attacks on the Homeland: the Christmas Day bomber and the printer cartridge plot. Fortunately, these attacks did not materialize. But AQAP has changed the name of the game, making a failure that causes us to panic, just as good as a successful attack.

And we know AQAP’s leaders are trying to spread its messages far beyond the borders of Yemen with flashy magazines aimed at Western audiences. These threats to the homeland cannot be ignored, just like the threats from other domestic extremist groups.

We should also remember that Yemen is an extremely fragile state – making it fertile ground for violent extremists. Faced with rebellion in the Northern provinces and secession talks in the South, the Yemeni government has little time to focus directly on AQAP—and the recent political unrest has only compounded the situation.

Moreover, Yemen’s oil reserves – its largest source of revenue – are dwindling, as is the nation’s water supply, while the population continues to skyrocket. Extremist groups have flourished in Yemen by exploiting these weaknesses and the government’s lack of control.

While there is no simple answer to address the problems that beset Yemen, many experts agree that we need a comprehensive strategy that addresses governance and development, in addition to military and counterterrorism needs. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about how we can bring more stability to Yemen and tackle the threats of al Qaeda.”

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