

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

### *The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response*

March 10, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response”:

“As we begin today’s hearing, I want to take a moment to thank Chairman King for agreeing to my request to invite Rep. Dingell and Sheriff Baca. These witnesses will add to the committee’s understanding of the outreach and cooperation between the Muslim community and government officials.

I also want to re-iterate my belief that a hearing on the linkage between extreme ideology and violent action should be a broad-based examination.

Yesterday, the FBI made an arrest in the recent Martin Luther King Day bombing attempt.

News reports identify the suspect as a member of the same white supremacist group that influenced Oklahoma City bomber, Timothy McVeigh.

I urge the Chairman to hold a hearing examining the homeland security threat posed by anti-government and white supremacist groups.

As the Committee on Homeland Security, our mission is to examine threats to this nation’s safety. A narrow focus that excludes known threats lacks clarity and may be myopic.

I understand that our personal experiences play a role in how we see the world. We all come to this place from somewhere else.

As I understand it, the Chairman’s background includes the history of a country divided by religion and torn by a prolonged and violent struggle.

I am from Mississippi. My personal history is one in which non-violence was a bedrock principle in the struggle for societal change and political rights. Religion played a role in that struggle, too.

But we are not in those places now.

As Members of Congress, our words transcend this hearing room. We must be vigilant that our words and our actions do not inflame.

Acknowledgement of an obligation to be responsible does not equal political correctness.

We must be mindful that this country is conducting two wars. Our words and actions cannot be used to endanger our soldiers.

I had hoped that this hearing could be used as a forum to point out a recent report of the Southern Poverty Law Center. Last week, the Southern Poverty Law Center released a chilling report. The number of active hate groups in the United States topped 1,000 for the first time and the anti-government movement has expanded dramatically for the second straight year.

The Southern Poverty Law Center study indicates that several factors have fueled this growth. Those factors include resentment over the changing racial demographics of the country, frustration over the lagging economy, and the mainstreaming of conspiracy theories and other demonizing propaganda aimed at minorities and the government.

I am particularly troubled that much of the current vitriol has been directed toward the President and the First Lady. In the wake of the Gabrielle Giffords shooting, news accounts indicate that in a public meeting, a Member of Congress heard a threat made against the life of the President that was greeted with laughter.

We live in troubling times.

I have heard concerns that today's hearings will stoke a climate of fear and distrust in the Muslim community. It may also increase fear and distrust of the Muslim community. For law enforcement officials, outreach and cooperation may become more difficult.

As we consider the possible domestic effects of our actions, we must also consider the possible effects abroad. As I look at the recent uprisings in North Africa and the Middle East, I am struck by the fact that these movements are inspired by secular notions of democracy and freedom. Theocracy seems to be on the sidelines.

In scores of hearings and briefings, Members of this committee have been told that al Qaeda's main recruiting tool is the notion that the powers of the West are aligned against the people of the Middle East. The U.S. is accused of engaging in a modern day crusade against Islam.

We cannot give this lie a place to rest. I cannot help but wonder how propaganda about this hearing's focus on the American Muslim Community will be used by those who seek to inspire a new generation of suicide bombers."

# # #

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499  
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>