

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Understanding the Threat to the Homeland From AQAP***

September 18, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency hearing entitled “Understanding the Threat to the Homeland From AQAP”:

“For the past two-and-a-half years, democracy has been on the march in North Africa and the Middle East. Yemen, the poorest country in the Arab world, has seen a change in leadership as its former President Ali Abdallah Saleh was forced to transfer power to Abd Hadi. 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.

However, strides made by the Obama Administration have made life more difficult for AQAP. Through drone strikes, several high-profile AQAP senior leaders including Anwar Al-lawki, have been killed. Even though these drone strikes have eliminated senior AQAP leadership, these targeted strikes have killed Americans. The Administration knows this is a reality and the Department of Justice has issued a guidance for the use of targeted strikes against Americans abroad.

Once again, twelve years after 9/11, we fall on the side of security which is a vivid reality in the world in which we live. Even though AQAP’s operations appear to have diminished, it has not prevented the organization from re-strategizing and remaining a threat to the US. The deaths of Al-lawki and Khan have been detrimental to its publication Inspire magazine. The syntax and grammar is not as amenable to an American audience. But that does not prevent the magazine from celebrating the Boston bombing or sympathizing with lone wolves.

Targeted killings also did not prevent AQAP from issuing a threat considered credible by US intelligence officials. This threat prompted the closure of several embassies in the Middle East and North Africa for several days in early August.

See with AQAP, the game is the same, yet the methods are different. AQAP’s ability to incite panic and economic devastation still plagues the United States. Even though AQAP’s large-scale plots—such as the Christmas Day bombing of 2009—have been unsuccessful, they still impact the way we travel and at a significant economic cost. The economic cost of terrorism is something that cannot be overlooked. We cannot call attacks that do not yield a loss of life unsuccessful when we continue to go into debt as a country and when we change our lives due to close calls. AQAP knows this and since its capabilities have diminished, it can certainly use this as leverage.

I am not advocating ignoring credible threats and standing in the face of danger. These threats cannot be ignored. But what also cannot be ignored is the cost of terrorism and terrorist threats. The methods currently used to decrease AQAP’s presence and reach to the United States still haven’t prevented the organization from causing devastation to not only our lives but also our economy.”

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