

Ranking Member Brian Higgins (D-NY) - Opening Statement  
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

Hearing: “Al Qaeda in Egypt: Implications for the Homeland”

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The United States relationship with Egypt is fractured and as we wait and see where Egypt’s current political state leads the country, we must be mindful of our past relationship with Egypt while keeping an eye on any emerging threats from the region.

The United States has provided significant military and economic assistance to Egypt since the late 1970s. Between 1948 and 2011 the United States has given Egypt about \$71.6 billion dollars in bilateral military and economic aid.

Last month, this Congress voted to restore 1.5 billion dollars in aid to Egypt. Aside from Israel, that is more money than the United States has given to any country. The United States has invested in Egypt to attempt to maintain regional stability.

In 2011, the Egyptian uprising caused the world to stop and watch as Egyptians revolted and caused the thirty year regime of Hosni Mubarak to end. In June 2012, there was hope for Egypt as it held a democratic election and elected Mohammed Morsi.

However, during his presidency, Morsi brought the nation to the brink of collapse and was not a legitimate ruler in the eyes of the majority of Egyptians. In July 2013, the Egyptian military removed its democratically elected President Morsi and replaced him with its own regime.

Throughout the past months, there have been a series of deadly attacks in the region. Including a coordinated attack in Cairo last month. Additionally, freedom of the press remains stifled. Journalists have been detained.

The Egyptian economy is extremely unstable and the people do not feel safe in their own communities. One group that has emerged as one of Egypt’s biggest threats is Al Qaeda inspired Ansar Beyt al Maqdis (ABM).

ABM first emerged in 2011, amid a security vacuum caused by the fall of former President Hosani Mubrak. The group is based in the Sinai desert, next to the Israeli border. The group’s operations expanded drastically after Mori was overthrown in July.

Egypt is a country in turmoil and our relationship with the country demands that there be some significant oversight given to the aid that we are providing.

This subcommittee also has the responsibility to examine what impact if any that ABM or any other terrorist organization operating in the Egypt has on the United States.

It is imperative that we examine these threats and their relevance, if any, to the United States interests in Egypt. It is also imperative that we hear from both the government and private sector in open forum about Egypt and Al Qaeda’s presence in that region and I hope future hearings will have government witnesses.