

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Al Qaeda in Egypt: Implications for the Homeland***

February 11, 2014 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for Counterterrorism and Intelligence subcommittee hearing entitled “Al Qaeda in Egypt: Implications for the Homeland”:

“For the past three years, the world has watched and witnessed change in Egypt. Since the Egyptian uprising, the country has been overcome with protest, unrest, and rapid political change. On February 10, 2011, after 18 days of fierce protests, former Egyptian president Hosni Murbak stepped down, ending a thirty year regime. In June 2012, Egypt had an historic election. The people elected Mohammed Morsi by a majority vote. In July 2013, the Egyptian military ousted Morsi.

In the months following the ousting of former President Morsi, the Obama Administration suspended aid to Egypt while the State Department reviewed the military takeover and the new government’s commitment to democracy during the transition. In addition to the United States cutting off funding to the government, there have been sophisticated attacks in Egypt. For example, in January 2014, coordinated attacks in Cairo killed six and injured 100.

According to the Egyptian government, Egyptian forces have arrested over a thousand terrorists since its transition from the Morsi regime. Violent attacks in a country that has been in turmoil and that has several extremist groups that call Egypt home should be of concern. What is also of concern is the recent crackdown by the Egyptian government on journalists and academics who have not been able to freely do their jobs in Egypt. The White House has asked the Egyptian government to drop the charges of the journalists and academics that are being held.

Last month, this Congress restored 1.5 billion dollars in annual aid to Egypt. As an oversight body, this Subcommittee is right in being concerned about the turmoil in Egypt and whether the fallout from this turmoil creates any direct threats to the United States or its interests abroad.

It is also a Constitutional mandate for this Congress to ask questions about the United States military and diplomatic actions in Egypt. However, this Subcommittee’s hearing strategy is ineffective. Like many of the hearings this Committee and Subcommittee have held this Congress, no one from the intelligence community has been invited to inform the Members about the threat and if there is imminent risk to the United States.

Nor is there anyone from the State Department here to testify and let the Subcommittee know if the Egyptian government has successfully fulfilled the Congressional requirements to for the country to receive aid from the United States. While I look forward to the witness testimony today, I believe we are doing ourselves a disservice by not speaking with the appropriate Administration officials in an open forum.”

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