

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****ISIS in the Pacific: Assessing Terrorism in Southeast Asia and the Threat to the Homeland***

April 27, 2016 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “ISIS in the Pacific: Assessing Terrorism in Southeast Asia and the Threat to the Homeland”:

“I would also like to thank the witnesses for appearing to testify to examine terror groups operating in Southeast Asia and their allegiances to other terrorist groups such as the Islamic State and Al Qaeda. These terrorist groups have a long history of seeking to exploit this region, which includes the nation with the highest population of Muslims.

While most countries in Southeast Asia operate secular governments, terrorist groups continue to make progress at radicalizing and inspiring attacks.

ISIL has stepped up its efforts to recruit in this area. While estimates vary, reportedly between 600-1200 foreign fighters from Southeast Asia have traveled to Iraq and Syria to join ISIL.

Earlier this year, Islamic militants attacked downtown Jakarta wounding at least 23 people and leaving eight dead, including three civilians and five militants. ISIL claimed responsibility for the attack.

In one of the most horrific attacks in Indonesian history, in 2002, a bombing in Bali killed over 200 people most of them Western tourists.

With assistance from the United States, Southeast Asia continues to make strides in its counterterrorism efforts. While we must encourage these countries’ efforts to counter the spread of jihadist violence, we must also be concerned that some countries may use these efforts as a guise to suppress opposition.

We must continue to promote the expansion of democratic ideals and principles in Southeast Asia while also weeding out the jihadist elements in these countries that seek to destroy these freedoms.

The relatively small number of terrorist attacks in recent years is a testament to the effectiveness of the military and police counterterrorism efforts in these nations.

Today, I look forward to hearing testimony about the evolving threat in these nations and how the countries are responding to counter this threat.”

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