



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Roundtable briefing to examine homeland security issues related to acts of domestic terrorism

September 4, 2019

Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

I wish we were here on a less somber occasion; however, this is a necessary one. Almost a year ago, a gunman, who espoused anti-Semitic views online, entered the Tree of Life Synagogue during Shabbat morning services and opened fire using an AR-15 style assault rifle, killing 11 community members. This act of domestic terrorism was the deadliest attack against the Jewish community in the history of the United States.

Domestic terrorism—particularly white supremacist extremism and other forms of right-wing extremism—are a real and persistent threat to the security of our homeland. As many of you here know, attacks towards the Jewish community in the United States alone doubled last year.

Myself and my colleagues are here today to tell you firsthand that none of this can be ignored. Congress and the federal government cannot sit idly by and do nothing.

This roundtable will allow Members of Congress and members of the Pittsburgh community to discuss the October 2018 attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue. In doing so I hope to learn about how the community is working to address the persistent threat from domestic terrorism and suggestions as to how the federal government and its partners can take meaningful further action to support and protect communities like yours.

The Homeland Security Committee, of which I chair, is dedicated to taking actions to address the rise in domestic terrorist attacks. Last month, I met with Acting DHS Secretary Kevin McAleenan in Jackson, Mississippi to discuss domestic terrorism at the public launching of the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Subcommittee for the Prevention of Targeted Violence Against Faith-Based Communities.

Next week, I will convene a full committee hearing with terrorism experts in academia and private industry to focus on global terrorism and address both domestic and international terrorism threats to the homeland. And in the future the Committee will hold a hearing with top officials from the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the National Counterterrorism Center to focus on the deadly growth in domestic terrorist threats in the U.S.

Truly, your participation today is integral to our future efforts. We must get our future policy to combat this threat right. There is too much at stake. We look forward to learning from you as well as working with the Pittsburgh community to address the threat of domestic terrorism. I hope that after this Roundtable today, this is only the beginning of our conversations. Thank you for welcoming us into your community to engage such a sobering topic.

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