



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## Hearing Statement of Intelligence & Counterterrorism Subcommittee Chairwoman Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)

### *Current Status of ISIS and al Qaeda*

June 15, 2022

In the midst of addressing emerging threats to the Homeland, including the divisiveness from an increased polarization of the political landscape; domestic terrorist events, particularly targeting protests and religious institutions; and the seemingly never-ending spate of cyber attacks; it can be easy to lose sight of more longstanding threats, like those posed by foreign terrorist groups like ISIS and al Qaeda.

But through affiliates in several countries across the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia, ISIS and al Qaeda are planning, plotting, fundraising, recruiting, and carrying out attacks. And the abrupt withdrawal of the U.S. from Afghanistan has only made this threat worse.

In this Committee, we have heard from senior officials at DHS, the FBI, and the Intelligence Community that currently the most lethal threat the American public faces is from domestic violent extremists—our fellow citizens who have resorted to violence in furtherance of various agendas. Although domestic violent extremists pose the most lethal threat, it is not the only threat.

As a former CIA officer and Pentagon official, I am keenly aware of the destruction ISIS and al Qaeda can leave in their wake. And I know that we must remain vigilant and stay one step ahead of terrorist plotting.

We are now more than 20 years past the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It has been almost 25 years since our embassies were bombed in East Africa, and nearly 30 years since the World Trade Center was bombed for the first time.

Terrorists' tactics have evolved over this time period – from truck bombs and then airplanes used as missiles to bombs being hidden in printer cartridges and improvised armed drones.

But what has not changed is that America is an outsized target.

While the Subcommittee will soon move to close the hearing and today's testimony will be received in a classified setting so that my fellow Members can hear a detailed assessment of the threat posed by ISIS, al Qaeda, and their affiliates – I want the American public to be clear-eyed about the persistent terrorist threat to America.

In its *2022 Annual Threat Assessment*, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence describes ISIS, al Qaeda, and other foreign terrorist groups as likely posing the greatest threat to Americans while outside of our borders. It further describes these groups as having been degraded over time but still having a vision of carrying out a strike on the U.S. Homeland.

While the brave men and women of our Armed Forces and our Intelligence Community work diligently, every day, to put out the flames of terrorism – these embers will likely persist for the foreseeable future.

Hence, we are having today's hearing – to receive the Department of Homeland Security's, the National Counterterrorism Center's (NCTC), and the Federal Bureau of Investigation's assessment of the threat currently posed by ISIS and al Qaeda and how they view the trajectory of the threat.

I am also looking forward to hearing how the agencies are collaborating, from the intelligence and information sharing angle as well as from the perspective of securing international travel and keeping cyberspace safe from terrorist recruitment, training, and fundraising.

I am concerned that terrorists may also take advantage of new technologies, such as cryptocurrencies, to help fund their efforts and further their violent agenda and extremist ideologies, and am interested in understanding how we are combating the illicit uses of these technologies.

I hope today's hearing improves our understanding of the threat and gives us the information we need to support your missions.

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