



COMMITTEE ON  
**HOMELAND  
SECURITY**  
DEMOCRATS

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, *Ranking member*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

***State Sponsors of Terrorism: An Examination of Iran's Global  
Terrorism Network***

**Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence**

**April 17, 2018**

It is no secret that Iran continues to be a threat to our interests abroad, our international allies, and our national security polices in the homeland. Last Congress, I commented on the complexity of the ways that Iran's foreign policy decisions and global support for terror groups harm U.S. national security challenges. Moreover, today the threats that Iran poses to U.S. interests has only become more convoluted.

As a committee, we must acknowledge that in order to have an honest conversation about the threat Iran poses, we cannot discuss the foreign policy issues related to Iran in a vacuum. Discussions about Iran must also include discussions about Russia. Iran's actions around the world, specifically in Syria, have increased instability in an already volatile region. Iran views Syria as a longtime ally and a strategic transit route to funnel weapons and other support for Hezbollah in neighboring Lebanon.

Iranian-backed militants first entered the Syrian civil war in 2013 as the de facto ground forces of the Syrian government and are currently protected by Russian air power. Iran, Russia, and its other allies are actively countering Syrian rebel groups and U.S. led coalition members.

Therefore, a productive dialogue and debate about the concerns Iran presents to U.S. national security cannot happen without also addressing its close allies, Russia, and the Syrian Assad regime.

In addition to discussing Iran and its expansive terrorist network, I expect that my colleagues and I will address the inadequate and inconsistent measures taken by the Trump administration to defend our homeland against Iranian threats.

The recent chaotic announcement of a withdrawal of troops, potential termination of the "Nuclear Deal," and the depletion of aid and diplomatic resources are short sighted and dangerous policies that only embolden Iran.

As communicated and if implemented, these ill-advised policies impede U.S. security abroad and at home. However, the need to protect innocent civilians is without question something we all here can agree upon.

In light of that, the Trump administration's decision this past weekend to launch missile strikes against the Syrian government was arguably justifiable. Unfortunately, the

Administration still appears to be lacking a coherent strategy in Syria and the region – leaving U.S. interests at risk.

Now more than ever, we need and deserve a President and Administration that can put forward a cohesive strategy that aims to tackle the problems that remain between us and our Iranian counterparts, with broader vision of our goals in the Middle East region. Debate that relies on scare tactics and empty rhetoric will do little to produce meaningful results in a situation as complex as this.

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