

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Reassessing the Threat: the Future of Al Qaeda and Its Implications for Homeland Security”

July 30, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “Reassessing the Threat: the Future of Al Qaeda and Its Implications for Homeland Security”:

“Fear is a powerful motivator that can be a very good or very bad thing. Fear drives people to action – to protect their families, themselves, and others when disaster strikes. Fear also drives people to panic – and bad decisions – especially when it is a constant drumbeat and distraction.

Over the last few months, the Committee has been talking about freedom from fear so the nation can make wise choices about how to protect ourselves from terrorist attacks and other calamities. That does not mean that we have nothing to fear.

On the contrary, I am well aware that Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups would like nothing more than to strike the homeland and kills thousands of people. What it does mean, however, is that we have to have a September 12th mentality about homeland security.

A September 12th mentality will get us beyond the understandable but overwhelming fear of September 11th. It will help us catch our breath, reassess, and make good choices based on facts. Almost eight years after the 9/11 attacks, it’s not surprising that Al Qaeda has evolved – that some within it have started questioning the violent tactics of the past and offering alternatives.

We must evolve, too. That’s why I’m so glad to have both Peter Bergen and Lawrence Wright with us this morning. Their insights on Al Qaeda – based on painstaking research – offer a glimpse of something new that may be happening. If we can use the rebellion and unraveling within Al Qaeda that they describe to our advantage, we may one day have less to fear.”

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security

H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515

Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499

<http://homeland.house.gov>