

Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“Terror in Europe: Safeguarding U.S. Citizens at Home and Abroad”

Tuesday, April 5, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the horrific attack in Brussels that took place just two weeks ago.

As with the Paris terror attacks, similar attacks in places around the world like Pakistan and Turkey, as well as the Boston Marathon and San Bernardino attacks on our shores, what happened in Brussels exposes once again the vulnerability of public places such as malls, train stations, and airports.

With today’s 24-hour news cycle, Americans are seeing these attacks unfold in real time. From our living rooms, we can see the devastation these attacks caused, and the pain they inflict on the victims and their loved ones.

So Americans are understandably uneasy and concerned for their safety and for the safety of their families, friends, and neighbors. But it’s important to remember that the most potent weapon terrorists like those who committed these recent attacks have is fear. They want to scare us into turning against one another and our neighbors. They want to make us afraid to go about our everyday lives.

We might feel a little bit safer if we saw more obvious security at every public place we visit. But those measures come at a high price, and don’t necessarily deter terrorists who do not value other lives or even their own.

And many would argue – I believe correctly – that turning every public place into a heavily guarded fortress would restrict Americans’ own personal freedoms. Instead, we need to be smart about how we combat these ever-evolving terror threats.

We must continuously sharpen our ability to predict and prevent terrorist plots through the use of our robust intelligence and law enforcement capabilities. Refining these tools and ensuring that we keep pace with the evolving threats we face is an important responsibility of our federal agencies and Congress.

We also have a responsibility, along with our international partners, to continue to take the fight to ISIS in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. ISIS’s recent losses have been severe. It has lost 40 percent of the territory it once held in Iraq.

Coalition forces have also killed more than 10,000 ISIS fighters and 20 key ISIS leaders in recent months, including ISIS’s chief propagandist and executioner. Just over a week ago,

American forces carried out a strike that led to the death of ISIS's finance chief and second-in-command.

Simultaneously, we continue to enhance the capabilities of the Iraqi Counter Terrorism forces. Iraqi forces recaptured Ramadi from ISIS in January, and the battle to seize the ISIS stronghold in Mosul is well underway. And with the ceasefire in Syria holding, more guns are being turned on ISIS.

ISIS is being pushed back on its heels in Iraq and Syria. The consequence may very well be that the group, out of desperation, will seek to project the façade of power and momentum by directing or inspiring terrorist attacks against unprotected targets in Europe, the United States, and around the world.

We must not let these cowardly attacks deter our resolve. To the contrary, we must redouble our efforts to destroy ISIS and take away its safe havens.

But we must also learn from the Brussels terror attack to ensure that our intelligence and law enforcement authorities at all levels of government are ready and able to identify and stop similar attacks here at home well before they are set in motion.

I hope our witnesses today will share some insight on the lessons from the Brussels attack and will help provide guidance on the actions this Committee should take.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.