

**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement
“Protecting America from the Threat of ISIS”**

Thursday, May 26, 2016

As submitted for the record:

The purpose of this hearing is to examine the threat posed by ISIS to U.S. interests at home and abroad, and the actions taken by the United States government to address this threat.

As the administration struggles to formulate a comprehensive strategy and to provide the leadership necessary to accomplish the president’s goal of destroying ISIS, the effects of the instability in the region continue to spill over into other parts of the world. Nearly two years ago, the leader of ISIS declared that the organization was an independent state. Since then, successful attacks in Paris and Brussels led to a warning from James Clapper, the Director of National Intelligence, that ISIS could direct terrorists in the United States to commit a similar attack. After all, ISIS provided the inspiration for the San Bernardino terrorists who killed and injured dozens of Americans last December. More recently, on Tuesday, an ISIS supporter was arrested in the Bronx.

According to some reports, there are 43 groups either affiliated with or proclaiming to support ISIS, and more than 42,900 foreign fighters have joined the group. ISIS claimed to bring down at least one commercial airliner and is the first extremist group to successfully conduct a chemical attack since Aum Shinrikyo in 1995. This is a barbaric terrorist organization whose atrocities include rape, enslavement, mass murder, crucifixions, beheadings and torture.

Today, we will ask three questions: First, what is the administration’s strategy for defeating and destroying ISIS? Second, what are the consequences to our homeland security of failing to defeat ISIS? Third, what steps is the administration taking to address ISIS’ threat to our homeland security?

Yesterday, our committee passed important legislation that Senator Carper and I have worked on for over a year. Our bill would help address management challenges at the DHS and bring increased transparency, accountability and effectiveness to the agency’s operations, enabling the agency to better protect the American people. Today, I want to hear from the deputy secretary where we need to further improve our homeland security defenses to protect Americans from the threat posed by ISIS.

In a few months, we will mark the 15th anniversary of the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. I am gravely concerned that the American people are at a greater risk of suffering a terrorist attack by Islamic extremists today than at any time since 2001.

The American people deserve a strategy to defeat ISIS. Today we will examine what more the DHS and other federal agencies must do to protect the American people from the threat posed by ISIS. I look forward to hearing our witnesses answer these key questions today.