

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Joint Committee Hearing: Examining the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol, Part II
March 3, 2021

Thank you Chairwoman Klobuchar, Ranking Member Portman, Ranking Member Blunt, and our colleagues from the Rules Committee for once again joining us to convene this second hearing on the January 6 attack on our Capitol building.

Last week's hearing provided the first opportunity for the American people to hear about the attack directly from the security officials on the ground. Today, we'll be seeking answers on the role of federal national security and counterterrorism agencies and officials played in the intelligence gathering, security planning, and response to the attack.

Thank you to each of our witnesses for joining us voluntarily today. I am grateful to all of you and the employees at each of your agencies, including the National Guard units who continue to assist in protecting the Capitol, for your continued efforts to safeguard our national security. While there are still many unanswered questions about January 6th, it's clear that this violent, coordinated attack was the result of a massive and historic intelligence failure.

Today, our committees will once again examine the systemic breakdowns that led to this terrible attack, and particularly, how our intelligence and national security experts failed to see it coming.

This is not a new problem. For years, I have been raising the alarm about the growing domestic terrorism threat with the Department of Homeland Security, FBI and other key agencies, and their continued failures to adequately and effectively align our counterterrorism efforts to address the threats posed by domestic extremists.

But the January 6th attack must mark a turning point. There can be no question that the domestic terrorist threat, including violence driven by white supremacists and anti-government groups, is the gravest terrorist threat to our homeland security.

Moving forward, the FBI, which is tasked with leading our counterterrorism efforts, and the Department of Homeland Security, which ensures that state and local law enforcement understand threats that American communities face, must address this deadly threat with the same focus, resources and analytical rigor they apply to foreign threats such as ISIS and Al Qaeda.

Today's witnesses are uniquely qualified to discuss what intelligence was produced in the days leading up to the attack, what officials missed as they assessed the likelihood of violence that day, and why our intelligence community failed to heed the crystal clear warnings that were broadcast on social media and publicly reported in the days leading up to the 6th, that a violent attack on the Capitol was imminent.

We also need answers about the operational failures that terrible day, especially the response to secure the building once the Capitol was breached.

I'm pleased that we have representatives of both the Department of Defense's civilian leadership, and the National Guard, to help us understand why it took several hours for the National Guard to arrive and offer additional security and support.

The January 6th attack on the citadel of our democracy remains a dark stain on our nation's history. Our committees have a responsibility to carry out our oversight duties in a serious and nonpartisan way.

I look forward to having a productive discussion, and getting the answers the American people deserve, and that we need to make needed reforms to ensure an attack like this never happens again.