



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

***Violent Extremism: How Are People Moved from Constitutionally-Protected Thought to Acts of Terrorism?***

December 15, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing & Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee hearing entitled “Violent Extremism: How Are People Moved from Constitutionally-Protected Thought to Acts of Terrorism?”:

“More than eight years after the 9/11 attacks it is not particularly surprising that we face the growing, ever-changing threat from violent extremists. The Department of Homeland Security, stood up in the wake of those attacks, has also evolved over the course of these past years. Yet even amidst change, there are constants.

On one hand, we are challenged by the constant and continued threat posed by terrorists, both transnational and domestic. We are challenged by groups who are able to locate and recruit individuals willing to perpetrate inconceivable acts of violence.

On the other hand, we are supported by the constant efforts of our dedicated law enforcement, intelligence, and homeland security professionals who help defend against that threat.

The other constant is that we, too, have a duty. We must remain vigilant. We must be vigilant to ensure that those who bear the brunt of detecting, identifying, disrupting and dismantling efforts by terrorists to strike at us – our citizens, our homeland, and our allies – have the adequate resources and tools to do so. We must be vigilant that we do not slip back into a September 10th, 2001 mentality regarding the sharing of information.

No matter how we say it – “knowing what we know,” “connecting the dots,” “getting the right information to the right people at the right time” – we’re talking about the same thing. An environment in which information is shared is an environment in which better decisions can be made and, ultimately, one in which people are safer.

Finally, we must also be vigilant that we are doing everything we can to break the links between these groups and individuals they are grooming for violence. We – both law enforcement and our communities – must keep a watchful eye open for people like Zazi, Von Brunn, and Smadi.

But we must also be vigilant that those efforts, resources and tools are applied consistently and in ways that respect the privacy and civil liberties of American citizens and do not sacrifice our Nation’s values. For that reason, I am very glad to have all of the witnesses here before us this morning. I hope your insights will help us maintain our both our vigilance and our ideals.”

# # #

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978