

Opening Statement of Chairman Johnson
“Threats to the Homeland”
September 27, 2017

As submitted for the record:

Today, our nation faces serious national security challenges that grow more complicated by the day. We also know that we face serious challenges to public safety here at home from domestic extremist groups and independent actors, including white supremacists, sovereign citizens, Antifa, and others who threaten and commit violence for a political or social agenda. We were all horrified this summer when a reputed Nazi sympathizer drove a car into a crowd in Charlottesville and when a member of the “Terminate the Republican Party” Facebook group opened fire on a group of Republican Members of Congress and staff on a baseball field in Alexandria. And we must not lose sight of the deadly threats from abroad, where ISIS and other terrorist groups continue to threaten our way of life.

Today we welcome to the Committee the acting Department of Homeland Security Secretary, the new FBI Director, and the National Counterterrorism Center Director to discuss these and other threats facing our nation. Our Committee looks forward to this hearing each year as an opportunity to hear directly from these senior officials working to safeguard our nation and discuss how we can work together to resolve potential threats to the homeland.

Through hearings over the course of the last three years, we have made great strides in identifying problems, finding areas of agreement, and exploring root causes of America’s security challenges. Through 22 hearings related to border security, for example, we have learned that our borders are not secure and America’s insatiable demand for drugs is a root cause of that insecurity. We have held 11 hearings on cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection, exploring how nation-states and other adversaries continue to attack information networks to disrupt business and steal our nation’s secrets. And we have learned how critical infrastructure sectors, including our electric grid, remain vulnerable to attack in ways that could disrupt our way of life for extended periods of time.

Through nine hearings on terrorism and extremism, the Committee has explored the horrors committed worldwide by terrorist groups like ISIS, including the raping and slaughtering of women and children. ISIS, al-Qae’da, and affiliated Salafi Jihadists are using new methods and technology to increase their audience and inspire terrorist attacks. The U.S. military and intelligence community have made significant strides towards destroying ISIS, and we must complete that mission swiftly and fiercely. However, we have learned that even destroying ISIS will not destroy its hateful ideology or end radical Islamist terrorism.

All of these threats remind us of the need to remain vigilant, and of the importance of the men and women -- like our witnesses and the patriotic Americans they lead -- who work every day to keep us safe. I look forward to your testimony.