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The Evolution of the Terrorism Threat Against the United States
Ranking Member C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger
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Good Morning.

I would like to welcome FBI Director Robert Mueller to the hearing today. I am glad you signed on for two more years. I respect your expertise and commitment to protecting this country and thank you for your service. I also like the fact that you are a former prosecutor.

I am a former prosecutor, as well. I always remind the Chairman who is a former FBI agent to listen to his prosecutor.

I would also like to welcome Director Matt Olsen of the National Counterterrorism Center. Congratulations on your recent confirmation. I admired your work with the National Security Agency and look forward to working closely with you as you lead the NCTC.

We are here today to review the evolving threat against the United States posed by Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups.

We will evaluate how far we have come protecting our country since the September 11th attacks and where we still need to go.

We learned with 9-11 that we may have had the information, but we were unable to “connect the dots” that might have prevented the attack.

The Intelligence Community was not set up to share that information across different agencies.

There were stovepipes and turf wars.

We have worked hard over the past ten years to knock them down.

We’ve made substantial progress.

We made major changes to the intelligence community, especially when it came to domestic intelligence gathering and information sharing.

The FBI has come a long way since 9-11.

The National Security Branch was created within the FBI and a new culture was ushered in.

The FBI stepped outside of its traditional law enforcement role of arresting, prosecuting and convicting criminals and expanded its mission to collecting, analyzing and disseminating intelligence about terrorists who want to harm us here at home.

Remember – good intelligence is the best defense against terrorism.

It is critical that this information is shared across different agencies to keep our country safe.

We have moved from a “need to know” culture... to a responsibility to share.

The National Counterterrorism Center was also created to bring together the CIA, the FBI, NSA, DOD and other intelligence agencies, to work side-by-side to track down terrorists.

Creating this fusion center was a key recommendation of the 9-11 Commission.

At N-C-T-C, intelligence professionals take the intelligence information that is being collected and analyze it to try to determine the enemy's next move.

They ensure the information lands in the hands of the people who need it.

Since 9-11, one of the most effective tools to combat terrorism here in the US has been the Joint Terrorism Task Force, known as the J-T-T-F.

These strike forces, led by the FBI, are located in big cities all across the country.

They bring together highly trained, locally based investigators, analysts, linguists, and other specialists from dozens of U.S. law enforcement and intelligence agencies – some 40 groups are represented.

The J-T-T-F together with state and local government fusion centers ensure this critical threat information is passed down to the local, state and tribal authorities who are on the ground in our neighborhoods and communities.

We have had some great successes over the past ten years where we have stopped terrorists in their tracks... and we've had some challenges where we need to learn what we can do better in the future.

Just last week, a Massachusetts man was arrested and charged with plotting to attack the Capitol and the Pentagon with remote controlled aircraft filled with C-4 explosives and planning to fire automatic weapons at employees as they fled the buildings.

So far it appears the man acted alone.

Thanks to the outstanding work of the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force and its law enforcement partners this attack was stopped before the plans ever got off the ground.

The system worked and I applaud everyone in the intelligence community who had a hand in keeping our country and her citizens safe.

But we have also had situations where the system didn't work and we weren't able to stop the attacks... and terrorists were able to do their damage – sometimes with deadly consequences and other times, thankfully, the attack fell apart before anyone was hurt.

In 2010, Faisal Shazad attempted to blow up a car in Times Square in New York City but some quick thinking bystanders saw the smoke and alerted authorities.

Shazad pled guilty and was sentenced to life in prison.

In 2009, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the so-called "Underwear Bomber", allegedly tried to blow up a Detroit-bound plane but his explosives didn't ignite and no-one was hurt.

He is currently on trial.

The Intelligence Community believes Al-Qaeda leader Anwar al-Awlaki helped plan and organize this attack.

Awlaki was killed last week in Yemen.

One of the biggest challenges we face today is stopping Americans directly recruited by Al-Qaeda or self-radicalized on the internet from plotting to kill Americans.

These attacks are incredibly hard to track, especially if this person acts alone, because they can fly under the radar since they are not intensely linked to Al-Qaeda.

The Intelligence Community has been able to stop large-scale sophisticated attacks, but Al-Qaeda knows even small successful attacks can make a big impact on the American people.

During today's hearing, I would like to hear how the Intelligence Committee is doing stopping these attacks when an individual acts alone.

I would also like to hear what the death of Awlaki and fellow Al-Qaeda operative Samir Kahn mean for our country?

How will the loss of these two English speaking masters of propaganda calling for deadly attacks against Americans affect the future of Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula?

Will their media machine be as powerful without them?

In closing, the FBI and NCTC have made great strides over the past ten years since 9-11.

But, more needs to be done.

Our role in Congress is to provide oversight.

It is also our responsibility to give our intelligence professionals the resources, capabilities and authorities they need to do their jobs.

We must do this while also protecting civil rights and individual liberties.

I applaud the FBI for following the Constitution and the rule of law while keeping our country safe.

I look forward to evaluating ways we can make our country even safer.

Thank you.