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## **Ranking Member Ruppertsberger Opening Statement HPSCI Open Hearing September 18, 2014**

(Washington, DC) – Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppertsberger (D-MD), Ranking Member on the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, delivered the following opening statement at the Committee’s open hearing on September 18, 2014.

Thank you very much to our witnesses today. Each of you brings remarkable expertise and experience. We eagerly await your views on the terrorist threat and what we can do about it.

Let me be clear: America fights because it has to, not because it wants to. But when it fights, it fights hard.

After 9/11 we had to take dramatic action against Al Qaeda. Over the years, that action has been very effective. We have degraded Al Qaeda’s global capabilities. We’ve gotten Bin Laden and we’ve captured or killed thousands of core Al Qaeda terrorists. We have combined the best of our military, intelligence, law enforcement and diplomatic professionals to defend always and attack only when necessary.

Because of these professionals, and the programs that the Congress has set up, funded and overseen, there has been no successful attack on our homeland since 9/11.

That is no accident.

But today, even as core Al Qaeda is a shadow of its former self, new terrorist threats emerge and spread. Al Nusrah. The Khorasan Group. AQAP. And the worst of them: ISIL.

ISIL is a truly barbaric group that represents the worst of humankind. They are strong, organized and well financed. They seek bloody conquest, and they seek to attack us. They pose a direct threat to the U.S. and our allies.

We need to act against them—and we are.

But like the fight against Al Qaeda—which isn’t over yet—this will not be a short battle. It will be a long campaign.

I want to make clear that we cannot act like foxes, darting out to grab prey only to quickly retreat. We must be and remain engaged, striking hard when necessary, but always remembering to build the capacity of others on the ground, and to demand local and regional responsibility. Iraq must build a truly representative Government, and Middle East partners must take responsibility for maintaining stability, and holding territory, on the ground.

We also cannot be like a bull, charging at every cape, allowing ourselves to be goaded into long conflicts in distant lands. We need to avoid those mistakes of the past. We need to be smart, we need to be selective, we need to be precise, and we need to be engaged.

We need to target their leadership, and we need to target their money and their sources of new recruits.

As the President said, “If you threaten America, you will find no safe haven.” Correct. We have the best intelligence in the world, and we will find you. We will find you, and as the Vice President said, we will follow you to the gates of hell if necessary.

But for our counter-terrorism strategy to work, we also have to provide a positive vision that only America can provide. We are the leaders of the free world, and so we must stand up and show what freedom means—just as we did in the Cold War.

Thank you again to our witnesses for being here. We very much look forward to your assessments and recommendations.

Thank you, I yield back.

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