

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing on
“Libya’s Descent”
September 10, 2014**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

Less than three years ago, Libya was hailed as a successful example of multilateral engagement – NATO and allies working together to stop the slaughter of civilians, to free an oppressed people from dictatorship, and to chart a prosperous path forward for this North African country.

Yet today, Libya is chaotic and violent— awash in terrorist organizations and militias. Its porous borders allow for the easy transit of people, weapons, and money from conflicts across North Africa to Gaza, Syria, and Iraq. Rival governments in Tobruk and Tripoli make competing claims of legitimacy. Four months of fighting by the militias has forced 250,000 Libyans to flee, and brought a “climate of fear” across the country, according to a recent U.N. report.

Given this downward spiral, it wasn’t surprising that our embassy in Tripoli had to be evacuated early this summer. Last week, online videos of militants occupying that building reminded Americans of the deadly terrorist attack on our facility in Benghazi that took place two years ago tomorrow. A policy of neglect has led to a national security and humanitarian crisis.

A new U.N. Security Council called for a cease-fire and sanctions on those involved in the violence. But the rhetoric has not been matched with leadership. Perhaps we should not be surprised that regional states conducted airstrikes on Libya last month; hoping to help their favored proxy. Some suggest that Libya may even be headed for a partition, or that neighboring Algeria or Egypt may intervene.

We cannot allow Libya to become like Lebanon of the 1970’s and 1980’s – where regional states play out their feuds at the expense of the local population. But if that is to be avoided, Libya needs immediate attention. As we will hear today, the Administration is pushing all sides toward a political solution. But I don’t see this

happening without real pressure on the factions. Others advocate for cutting off outside support for militias and compelling their disarmament through the threat of force. Such action would have to be coupled with programs to unlock Libya's wealth to train a security force for all Libyans.

But given how poorly the U.S. and coalition partners have worked on Libya to date, it's tough to see such an effort coming together. Unfortunately, this Administration has shown no desire to lead in Libya.

We need to hear testimony today on the Administration's plans to respond to the very real threats to national security that a failed Libya represents. We need to also hear about the different proposals for action in Libya that are being discussed at the United Nations, among NATO members and neighboring states.

Libya and every conflict is rooted in local conditions. The many Middle East conflicts do share, however, a driving force of extremism – jihadists fueled by radical ideology and armed and financed from the region. It's a deadly accelerant the Administration has been slow in recognizing and countering.