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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA), Chairman**  
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:  
“Authorization for the Use of Military Force and Current Terrorist Threats”  
July 25, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Today we'll review a critical national security issue: the role of Congress in authorizing the use of military force. We have a very distinguished panel to help us do so.

Our nation continues to face the threat of radical jihadist terrorism. We have confronted this deadly movement with some measure of success, largely because of the skill, dedication, and sacrifice of the brave men and women in our armed services. But as recent attacks on the United States and our allies—such as the United Kingdom—show, the threat remains high. Our response must be coordinated, using information and economic tools, too.

Today, most U.S. combat operations are conducted under the Authorization for the Use of Military force – “AUMF” – that was enacted following the vicious September 11, 2001 attacks against our country. That AUMF has been used against al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and what have since become known as “associated forces.” Nearly three years ago, the Obama Administration determined that those forces include ISIS, which originated as al-Qaeda in Iraq.

The continued reliance on this legal authority has spurred debate. Some maintain that the 2001 AUMF has been stretched too far. Some believe that Congress – most of whose Members were not here in 2001 – should debate and reauthorize our military engagement. We have Members of Congress who have fought these wars, whose voices carry strong weight.

Over the last several years, this Committee has conducted more than 45 hearings related to conflicts fought under this AUMF and we often meet in classified settings with military commanders and other officials to review the grave terrorist threat against our nation. I know that our Members on both sides of the aisle take their responsibilities very seriously. We have had many conversations about the AUMF.

I believe that the President has the authority under the 2001 AUMF to defeat and destroy ISIS. Key outside experts and officials from the previous administration who've appeared before this committee have testified to this. But I also believe that a new and updated authorization for the use of military force would be ideal. The challenge is getting agreement on what exactly it should contain.

Proposed replacements vary widely. Some would empower the Commander in Chief, others would constrain him. Some would target groups, others would target ideologies. Some are limited in time, place, and type of military force, others are unlimited.

What I can't support is any effort to repeal the 2001 AUMF before reaching consensus on these issues. We face determined enemies—al-Qaeda, ISIS, and the Taliban—absolutely committed to harming us. There shouldn't be any signs of wavering in our fight.

Today's witnesses will shed light on a few key questions: Does the 2001 AUMF provide sufficient legal authority to deal with all of today's threats? Does continuing to rely on that authorization create any operational challenges or legal dangers? What should – or shouldn't – a replacement AUMF include?

Authorizing the use of military force is a critical and solemn congressional responsibility. This Committee will continue its focus on it.