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Director of National Intelligence Stresses Iran's Dangerous Regional Behavior

On May 11, leaders from the U.S. intelligence community testified before the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at the annual worldwide threat assessment hearing. In his remarks, Director of National Intelligence Dan Coats highlighted Iran's destabilizing behavior in the region, including its support for terrorist proxy groups and the Bashar al-Assad regime in Syria. "The Islamic Republic of Iran remains an enduring threat to U.S. national interests because of Iranian support to anti-U.S. terrorist groups and militants, the Assad regime, Houthi rebels in Yemen, and because of Iran's development of advanced military capabilities," he said. Director Coats emphasized the danger posed by Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah, stating, "Iran continues to be the foremost state sponsor of terrorism and, with its primary terrorism partner, Lebanese Hezbollah, will pose a continuing threat to U.S. interests and partners worldwide." He also underscored Iran's backing of the Assad regime through the provision of arms, financing and training to Syria. According to Coats, the Iranians manage as many as 10,000 Iraqi, Afghan and Pakistani Shia fighters in Syria and have sent hundreds of their own forces to support Assad.