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Statement from Director Brennan on Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act

Statement from CIA Director John O. Brennan Regarding the “Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act”

September 28, 2016

LANGLEY, VA – I deeply understand the pain of September 11th—I grew up just across the Hudson River in New Jersey and have spent much of my career trying to prevent terrorists from harming our country. The events of that September day will stay with us forever. I can only imagine the lasting anguish that the families of the victims must feel, and I sympathize with their devoted efforts to find justice.

However, I believe that the “Justice Against Sponsors of Terrorism Act” (JASTA) will have grave implications for the national security of the United States. The most damaging consequence would be for those US Government officials who dutifully work overseas on behalf of our country. The principle of sovereign immunity protects US officials every day, and is rooted in reciprocity. If we fail to uphold this standard for other countries, we place our own nation’s officials in danger. No country has more to lose from undermining that principle than the United States—and few institutions would be at greater risk than CIA.

Any legislation that affects sovereign immunity should take into account the associated risks to our national security.

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