



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Peter T. King

Opening Statement

June 20, 2012

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**Statement of Chairman Peter T. King (R-NY)
Committee on Homeland Security**

**"The American Muslim Response to Hearings on Radicalization within
their Community"**

**June 20, 2012
Remarks as Prepared**

Fifteen months ago this committee - the Homeland Security Committee which was formed in the wake of the tragic attacks of 9/11 - held the first in a series of hearings into radicalization of the Muslim-American community.

The necessity for these hearings was obvious - and there should have been bipartisan support.

Attorney General Holder, for instance, had stated in a major media interview that a crisis of radicalization to violence had arisen within the Muslim-American community.

The Attorney General said what kept him awake at night were 126 cases of homegrown terrorism since 2009, 90% of which involved American citizens or residents in contact with or inspired by Al Qaeda, who plotted to kill other Americans in mass-casualty terror attacks.

That kept me awake at night, too.

Yet, from the moment I announced the hearings, I was attacked by politically correct special interests and their unthinking allies in the media led by the New York Times. More than 1000 protestors came out in the rain to rally against me in Times Square the Sunday before the first hearing. Even Kim Kardashian found time to note her objection.

Of course, none of the nightmare scenarios anticipated by the media ever occurred. No religious war broke out. Not one bigoted word was uttered during the four investigative hearings we held – including the first ever joint hearing with the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee.

What we did do was force into the open the long overdue national debate on Muslim-American radicalization.

Here is what our Committee's investigation and hearings have put on the public record, so far:

We heard extraordinary testimony by:

- Four former top law enforcement officials;
- Four activists in the Muslim-American community;
- Three relatives of terrorist or terror victims;
- And three senior military officials.

Many were new voices who were given a platform.

The investigation and witnesses revealed that:

- The threat posed by radicalized Muslim-Americans is a clear and present danger to homeland security;
- Videos, Internet and face-to-face radicalization and recruiting by Al Qaeda and its affiliates inside our homeland emerged over the past three years – due in large part to our success in attacking Al Qaeda overseas;
- Radicalization in prisons has often been unchecked and aided by what the Committee learned were over 70 tapes in U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons inmate libraries by American citizen and AQAP leader Anwar al-Awlaki who was later killed in Yemen;

- The most successful radicalization and recruitment effort by an Al Qaeda affiliate was Somalia's al-Shabaab group, which signed up upwards of fifty American citizens for violent jihad;
- Homegrown terrorists' target of choice has increasingly been U.S. military communities inside the homeland;
- The number of military insiders suspected of being radicalized to violent Islamist extremism is a still-classified but truly eye-popping amount of ongoing cases.

Our investigation compelled elected officials, the Government and the media to confront an issue that is politically volatile.

Some elements, of course, refused to accept reality or engage in honest debate.

For instance, it was the media who almost 11 years ago had demanded to know why 9/11 was "allowed" to happen and demanded that Congress take steps to ensure we never again underestimated an enemy in our midst.

This committee was formed for that purpose.

When I became Chairman again last year, I saw a clear Constitutional duty to ask tough questions about counterterrorism, and our investigative hearings showed that the mainstream media doesn't always get it right – nor is it consistent.

For example the New York Times, besides attacking me, is now focusing its venom on the New York City Police Department for its focus on the Muslim-American community despite the fact that New York is the number one Islamist terrorist target in the country and the NYPD has prevented numerous attacks.

In 1993 – following the first World Trade Center attack – the Times blamed law enforcement for not doing enough against what they labeled "mysterious Muslims" operating out of New Jersey led by the "Blind Sheikh" Omar Abdul Rahman.

At that time the Times said: "Closer monitoring of the sheik may not necessarily have prevented the bombing. But it might have. ...If incidents like the trade center bombing can't be completely prevented, they can and should be made extremely rare."

Well that is exactly what this Committee has been doing – confronting in open hearings the uncomfortable truth about the current terror threat. I lost more than 150 friends, neighbors and constituents on September 11th and I never want it on my conscience that I didn't do all I could to prevent another attack or that I caved in to political correctness.

The overwhelming majority of Muslim-Americans are outstanding Americans. Yet the reality is that the Islamist terrorist threat comes from that community. Also, as a recent Pew poll demonstrated, 16% of Muslim Americans have a favorable or only a somewhat unfavorable view of Al Qaeda. That adds up to almost 440,000 people who are living in this country.

That is why we have held this series of hearings and why we will not back down.

That is why I also look forward to the testimony of the Muslim-American witnesses who are here today to testify on the impact which those hearings have had within their community. I applaud them for their courage and look forward to hearing their insights.

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