



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
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Committee on Homeland Security

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

June 20, 2012

**THE RADICALIZATION OF MUSLIM-AMERICANS: THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND
SECURITY’S INVESTIGATION OF THE CONTINUING THREAT**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND KEY FINDINGS

America before September 11, 2001 failed to recognize the enormity of the threat posed by the foreign terror group Al Qaeda or adequately confront it head on, despite warnings including the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993 by those who ideologically and tactically aligned themselves with Osama Bin Laden. Even eight years after Bin Laden’s attacks on innocents in New York, Pennsylvania and Washington, our government failed again to realize that Al Qaeda affiliates in Yemen and Pakistan were capable of – and almost succeeded in carrying out – strikes on U.S. soil. We cannot ever assume our government is all knowing or always right; scrutiny of counterterrorism priorities is a core duty of the Committee on Homeland Security’s constitutional oversight duties. To that end, the Committee held four investigative hearings since 2011 to examine the threat of violent radicalization emanating from within the Muslim-American community, where a small but potentially lethal percentage of that population has plotted severe mass casualty attacks against our homeland.

This is no phantom threat. It shares no equivalency with threats posed by other domestic terrorists who have no foreign ties or any demonstrated capability of organizing themselves for spectacular attacks inside the homeland. In late 2010, Attorney General Eric Holder said there had been 126 homegrown plots, threats and attacks since 2009 – the year homegrown radicalized] jihadis attacked military heroes at Fort Hood and in Little Rock. Since we began our investigation into the radicalization threat from within the Muslim-American community, many more violent Islamist extremists have been intercepted attempting to kill their fellow Americans.

Homegrown radicalization is now the vanguard of Al Qaeda's strategy to continue attacking the United States and its allies. The evidence comes from core Al Qaeda's tapes released from Pakistan, its Yemen affiliate's online Inspire homegrown terror how-to publication created by two American jihadis, and from Somalia's Al Qaeda affiliate al-Shabaab Mujahideen, who released a tape last fall by a suicide bomber from Minneapolis who urged: "My brothers and sisters, do jihad in America ... anywhere you find [infidels], fight them and be firm against them."

Each investigative hearing by the Committee's Majority uncovered significant findings that illuminated an uncomfortable reality: radicalization inside the Muslim-American community has often been ignored by many of that community's leaders, who have not always reported suspicious activity and have even obstructed law enforcement. In cities such as San Diego and Minneapolis, some imams participated in or facilitated recruiting and fundraising inside mosques. Facts collected by the Committee from open and classified government briefings, terror experts and confidential sources, and from witnesses called to testify by the Majority – including four former senior law enforcement officials, four Muslim community activists, three relatives of terrorists or terror victims, two senior Administration officials and one former Special Operations commander who is a terrorism expert – offer Congress, the Executive Branch and the public irrefutable proof of the extent of the radicalization threat.

The Committee's investigative efforts have forced a long overdue open debate about the growing issue of radicalization leading to violent Islamist extremism – which is the number one terrorist threat to this nation. Additionally, the Committee's hearings have liberated and empowered Muslim-Americans who had been intimidated by leaders in their own communities and who are now able to come forward and address this issue.

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

HEARING # 1: "THE EXTENT OF RADICALIZATION IN THE AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND THAT COMMUNITY'S RESPONSE."

- Finding #1: The Radicalization of Muslim-Americans Constitutes a Real and Serious Homeland Security Threat
- Finding #2: There is Not Enough Muslim-American Community Cooperation with Law Enforcement
- Finding #3: There is a Need to Confront the Islamist Ideology Driving Radicalization

HEARING # 2: "THE THREAT OF MUSLIM-AMERICAN RADICALIZATION IN U.S. PRISONS."

- Finding #4: The Radicalization of Prison Inmates to an Extremist Form of Islam is a Significant Problem, which Can Often Manifest Once Radicalized Prisoners Are Released
- Finding #5: The Radicalization of Prison Inmates is Often Precipitated By the Presence of Radical Clergy or Extremist Materials Within the Prison

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- Finding #6: There are Direct Ties Between Al-Shabaab and Al Qaeda and its Affiliates, and Al-Shabaab Recruits are Often Indoctrinated into Al Qaeda's Ideology and Network
- Finding #7: More Than 40 Muslim-Americans Radicalized and Recruited By Al-Shabaab May Pose a Direct Threat to the National Security of the United States and its Allies
- Finding #8: The Committee's Hearings on the Radicalization of Muslim-Americans Have Empowered Muslims to Effectively Address this Issue.

HEARING #4: "HOMEGROWN TERRORISM: THE THREAT TO MILITARY COMMUNITIES INSIDE THE UNITED STATES."

- Finding #9: The Terrorist Threat to Military Communities is Severe and on the Rise
- Finding #10: The "Insider" Threat to Military Communities is a Significant and Potentially Devastating Development
- Finding #11: Political Correctness Continues to Stifle the Military's Ability to Effectively Understand and Counter the Threat
- Finding #12: The Administration Chose Political Correctness Over Accurately Labeling and Identifying Certain Terrorist Attacks Appropriately, Thereby Denying Purple Hearts Medals to Killed and Wounded Troops in Domestic Terror Attacks

AN EXAMINATION OF THE THREAT OF DOMESTIC RADICALIZATION

Although almost eleven years have passed since the horrific terrorist attacks on September 11, we must not forget that the threat posed by Al Qaeda and its affiliates remains as deadly and paramount as ever. While successful counterterrorism operations removed the menace of Osama Bin Laden and Anwar al-Awlaki from being a direct operational terror threat to the U.S. Homeland, their ideological legacies and unwavering resolve to attack the United States and its Western allies live on.

As a result of the Allied invasion of Afghanistan and subsequent global counterterrorism operations, core Al Qaeda's primary safe haven in Pakistan is under siege and its leadership decimated, severely hindering its ability to carry out large-scale attacks on the U.S. Homeland and other Western nations. Al Qaeda and affiliates such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) have been forced to transform their strategy and operational tactics. A key focus of this new doctrine is based on recruiting and radicalizing Westerners and United States Persons capable of perpetrating attacks within their home countries. The threat no longer emanates solely from remote Al Qaeda operatives coordinating attacks from halfway across the world, but rather from radicalized individuals residing within the U.S. Homeland who are now ready to engage in terrorist activities in their own communities. This strategy shift presents a daunting challenge to the counterterrorism, intelligence and law enforcement communities within the U.S. and for our allies. The emergence of influential, English-speaking Al Qaeda representatives such as (now-dead) Anwar al-Awlaki has enhanced Al Qaeda's ability to successfully implement its strategy of targeting Americans and Westerners for recruitment.

Al Qaeda and its affiliates are using various tools to target and radicalize recruits in the West, including propaganda statements, audios, videos and online "magazines." In July 2010, the

Yemen-based AQAP launched the first in its series of slick, online, English propaganda magazines, *Inspire*. To date, AQAP has produced nine issues of *Inspire*.

Inspire targets American and Western European audiences in an effort to reach aspiring terrorists. It is essentially a “how to” for would-be terrorists cloaked in pop-culture packaging, and resembles most mainstream publications in structure: including letters from the editor, articles from well-known Al Qaeda leaders, high-resolution graphics and a “how to” section. The magazine was a dangerous step in AQAP’s strategy to recruit and radicalize Americans and Western Europeans, and has been found in the possession of some terror suspects.

The increasing frequency of Muslim-Americans becoming radicalized is an alarming trend and a great concern for U.S. national security. Attorney General Eric Holder said in a late 2010 media interview that 126 people had been indicted for terrorist related activity, including 50 U.S. Citizens.¹ As Times Square bomber Faisal Shahzad stated in his October 2010 appearance before the Southern District Court of New York: “Brace yourselves, because the war with Muslims has just begun. Consider me only the first droplet of the flood that will follow me.”²

COMMITTEE ACTIVITY

On February 9, 2011, then-National Counterterrorism Center Director Michael Leiter testified before the Committee that “... *AQAP remains intent on conducting additional attacks targeting the Homeland and US interests overseas and will continue propaganda efforts designed to inspire like-minded individuals to conduct attacks in their home countries.*”³

At the same hearing, Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano testified that the threat level today is as high as it has been since 9/11 because of increased radicalization in the United States.

The Committee on Homeland Security has a responsibility to ensure that it examines the most prescient and critical threats facing the United States. Under this mandate, Chairman King convened a series of investigative hearings examining the radicalization of Muslim-Americans. While the initial announcement of these hearings generated controversy and opposition, Committee leadership remained steadfast that this series of radicalization investigations is a critical facet of the main responsibility of this Committee: Protect America from a terrorist attack. The Department of Homeland Security and the Committee on Homeland Security were formed in response to the Al Qaeda attacks of 9/11. Undoubtedly, Congressional investigation of Muslim-American radicalization was the logical response to the unquestionable fact that homegrown radicalization is part of Al Qaeda’s strategy to continue attacking the United States and its allies.

Over the course of the series of investigative hearings, it became apparent that the majority of Americans support the Committee probing this issue. In September 2011, a national poll released

¹ Cloherty, Jack and Thomas, Pierre. "Attorney General's Blunt Warning on Terror Attacks," December 21, 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/attorney-general-eric-holders-blunt-warning-terror-attacks/story?id=12444727>

² “Times Sq. bomber's vile rant as he gets life in jail,” *New York Post*, October 6, 2010, http://www.nypost.com/p/news/local/manhattan/proud_to_be_terrorist_DBtc5U2eAYhWzacVpxK24K#ixz z1FEKywFDD

³ Leiter, Michael, Testimony before the House Committee on Homeland Security, "Understanding the Homeland Threat Landscape – Considerations for the 112th Congress," February 9, 2011, www.nctc.gov/.../Transcript-HHSC_Understanding-the-Homeland-Threat.pdf

results showing that 63% of Americans supported the ongoing radicalization hearings convened in March of last year and believe “they need to continue because they are providing information which is valuable and important to stop terrorism in the United States.” Former 9/11 Commission Vice-Chair Lee Hamilton testified that, “The greatest current terrorist threat to the United States is from Islamist extremists,” and that we also face “the addition of homegrown threats.”

COMMITTEE FINDINGS

As of June 2012, the Committee on Homeland Security had held four hearings that examined various aspects of the radicalization of Muslim-Americans within the United States. Each hearing yielded significant findings, which shed considerable light on this critical issue. While the Committee’s overall radicalization investigation remains ongoing, the evidence collected thus far provides substantial insight into the extent and threat of radicalization within the United States.

HEARING # 1: “THE EXTENT OF RADICALIZATION IN THE AMERICAN MUSLIM COMMUNITY AND THAT COMMUNITY’S RESPONSE.”

In March 2011, the Committee convened its first investigative hearing looking into the rising threat of Muslim-American radicalization and that community’s level of cooperation with law enforcement to counter the problem.

FINDING #1: THE RADICALIZATION OF MUSLIM-AMERICANS CONSTITUTES A REAL AND SERIOUS HOMELAND SECURITY THREAT

Despite the fact that homegrown violent Islamist extremism is a threat that has rapidly arisen since 2009 – the year of the Fort Hood and Little Rock attacks on soldiers by radicalized Muslim-Americans – many leaders refuse to fully acknowledge this problem or just how extensive this threat remains.

Witnesses at the first hearing addressed this issue and discussed the extensive nature of the threat of radicalization within the United States and reticence to fully acknowledge the problem. One of the witnesses, Mr. Melvin Bledsoe (the father of radicalized Little Rock recruiting center shooter Carlos Bledsoe), stated:

It seems to me that the American people are sitting around and doing nothing about Islamic extremism, as if Carlos’s story and the other stories told at these hearings aren’t true. There is a big elephant in the room, but our society continues not to see it. This wrong is caused by political correctness. You can even call it political fear - yes, fear. Fear of stepping on a special minority population’s toes, even as a segment of that population wants to stamp out America and everything we stand for.

Another witness, Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser (President and Founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy) asserted:

The course of Muslim radicalization in the United States over the past two years makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone to assert with a straight face that in America we Muslims do not have a radicalization problem.

FINDING #2: THERE IS NOT ENOUGH MUSLIM-AMERICAN COMMUNITY COOPERATION WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT

While the threat of domestic radicalization and homegrown terrorism has increased over the past few years, many within the Muslim community have expressed criticism of law enforcement's counterterrorism operations. Several Muslim organizations, such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), have repeatedly criticized law enforcement actions taken to stop potential terrorist activity. They accused the FBI of falsely entrapping Muslim-Americans and recommended guidelines for Muslims who choose to cooperate with law enforcement and the FBI.

Witnesses at the hearing also discussed the Muslim-American community's lack of cooperation, and specifically the role that groups like CAIR play in discouraging Muslim-Americans from cooperating with law enforcement. Dr. Jasser said:

When we speak about 'cooperation of Muslims with law enforcement,' what is more important is the growing culture of driving Muslims away from cooperation, partnership, and identity with our nation and its security forces. Our civil rights should be protected and defended, but the predominant message to our communities should be attachment, defense, and identification with America not alienation and separation.

Too many so-called Muslim leadership groups in America, like the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) or Muslim Advocates, have specifically told Muslims across the nation, for example, not to speak to the FBI or law enforcement unless they are accompanied by an attorney. Rather than thanking the FBI for ferreting out radicals within our community, they have criticized sting operations as being 'entrapment' – a claim that has not stood the test of anti-terrorism court cases since 9-11. Informants end up being showcased as bad apples and subjects of lawsuits rather than patriots.

Another witness, Mr. Abdirizak Bihi (the Director of Somali Education and Social Advocacy Center whose nephew Burhan Hassan was radicalized and recruited in Minneapolis to join al-Shabaab in Somalia, where he was ultimately killed) discussed this issue and how mosque leaders in Minneapolis encouraged its congregants – and the families of the missing young men who had fled to Somalia – not to cooperate with law enforcement. Bihi testified that when the families of the missing young men went to law enforcement for help, their mosque leaders disparaged them and claimed that they were lying about the disappearance of their children. Bihi stated:

The mosque leadership continued to disseminate a strong message that there were no children missing, rather than we the families were tools and being used by infidels to try and destroy the mosque. As a result of this, the families united and started Saturday meetings that included outreaching to other community members that also had missing children. We learned from the mosque leadership's tactics used to defame us that the community was the targeted audience, and we framed our outreach strategy to educate the community about the realities of what was happening to us. An intense outreach from both the mosque leadership and the family members started to unfold in the Somali American community, where we were trying to convince the community that our children were taken, that we weren't trying to destroy our own mosques (that we built), and that nobody can destroy a mosque. At the same time, the mosque leadership was sending the message to the families that had not yet spoken out, that:

- *if they speak up about their missing loved ones will end up in Guantanamo because nobody cares about Muslims;*
- *they have a better chance of getting their children back into the country if they remain silent;*

- *if they speak up, they will be morally responsible for having killed all the Muslims and destroyed all the mosques.*

Mr. Bihi also testified about the dangerous influence of powerful groups such as CAIR, who continue to discourage Muslim-Americans from cooperating with law enforcement. He noted:

Just as we continued to make progress in laying out the realities to our community, powerful organizations such as CAIR stepped into our community and stifled whatever progress we had made by trying to tell our Somali American community not to cooperate with law enforcement. CAIR held meetings for some members of the community and told them not to talk to the FBI, which was a slap in the face for the Somali American Muslim mothers who were knocking on doors day and night with pictures of their missing children and asking for the community to talk to law enforcement about what they know of the missing kids. It was a slap in the face for community activists who had invested time and personal resources to educate the community about forging a good relationship with law enforcement in order to stop the radicalization and recruitment of our children. We held three different demonstrations against CAIR, in order to get them to leave us alone so we can solve our community's problems, since we don't know CAIR and they don't speak for us. We wanted to stop them from dividing our community by stepping into issues that don't belong to them.

FINDING #3: THERE IS A NEED TO CONFRONT THE ISLAMIST IDEOLOGY DRIVING RADICALIZATION

Despite the growing problem of Islamist radicalization within the United States, many appear reticent to publicly acknowledge the ideological driver behind Al Qaeda's radicalization and recruitment of American citizens. However, witnesses at the hearing emphasized the need to address the ideological driver of radicalization of Muslim-Americans, namely violent Islamist extremism. Dr. Jasser said:

If the root cause of Muslim radicalization is Islamism (political Islam), what good is any effort at counterterrorism that decouples any suggestion of theology no matter how separatist from terror? How can law enforcement effectively do counter terrorism in our country without recognition that Political Islam and its narrative is the core ideology when, at its extreme, drives the general mindset of the violent extremists carrying out the attacks?

...Homeland Security, government, media and our general population are only focused on that final step when the jihadists seek violence against our homeland. But we will all be chasing our tails for centuries if that remains your focus. I implore you to walk it back and treat the problem at its root, at its jugular — the supremacism of political Islam.

...Our nation's attempts at counter-radicalization have proven so far ineffective because it has lacked a strategy and a forward ideology into Muslim communities. We have been so fixated on preventing the next attack that we have neglected to develop the tools necessary to defeat the ideology that drives the attack. It is malpractice for us to believe that by eschewing violence we solve the problem.

HEARING # 2: "THE THREAT OF MUSLIM-AMERICAN RADICALIZATION IN U.S. PRISONS."

In June 2011, the Committee convened its second hearing, which examined the threat of Muslim-American radicalization within the United States prison system. The current problem of Muslim-American radicalization in U.S. prisons is significant and has been acknowledged by Executive Branch policymakers and legislators of both parties. Former Director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons, Harley Lappin, testified to Congress that “inmates are particularly vulnerable to recruitment by terrorists,” and “we must guard against the spread of terrorism and extremist ideologies.”⁴

A number of cases since 9/11 have involved terrorists who converted to Islam or were radicalized to Islamism in American prisons, then subsequently attempted to launch terror strikes in the U.S. upon their release from custody. These radicalized terrorists have also carried out activities overseas. In January 2010, Senator John Kerry, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, released a report that stated: “Three dozen U.S. citizens who converted to Islam while in prison have traveled to Yemen, possibly for Al Qaeda training.”

Prison radicalization, unfortunately, is not unique to the United States. Recently, the British Home Secretary emphasized the growing threat of Islamist radicalization and unveiled its new counter-radicalization strategy to thwart terrorist recruitment behind bars. Just as home grown Al Qaeda terrorist attacks in Britain – including the 2005 subway attacks in London, the 2006 liquid explosives plot to blow up American planes flying from Britain and the 2007 car bomb attack on the Glasgow Airport – were emulated several years later in the United States with the attempted New York subway bombings in September 2009, the Fort Hood murders in November 2009 and the attempted Times Square bombing in May 2010, we must assume the same with prison radicalization.

FINDING #4: THE RADICALIZATION OF PRISON INMATES TO AN EXTREMIST FORM OF ISLAM IS A SIGNIFICANT PROBLEM, WHICH CAN OFTEN MANIFEST ONCE RADICALIZED PRISONERS ARE RELEASED

Recent cases over the last few years including Richard Reid, Kevin James, Michael Finton, James Cromitie and Jose Padilla have illustrated the danger of prison radicalization, which continues to constitute a serious threat.

One of the witnesses, Los Angeles Police Department Deputy Chief Michael P. Downing, who commands the department’s Counterterrorism and Special Operations Bureau, discussed this threat, noting:

It is generally understood that the majority of prison converts assimilate back into what they were doing prior to going to prison, however, it is the exception cases that have and will continue to strike fear in the hearts of Americans. It was estimated that seventeen to twenty percent of the prison population, or approximately 350,000 inmates comprise of Muslim inmates in 2003, and that 80% of the prisoners who convert while in prison, convert to Islam. It is further estimated that 35,000 inmates convert to Islam annually.

...There are several ongoing cases whose story is yet to be told, however, the common denominator is conversion to a radical form of Islam while in prison.

⁴ *Terrorist Recruitment and Infiltration in the United States: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Terrorism and Homeland Security of the S. Comm. on the Judiciary, 108th Cong. (2003) (statement of Director Lappin).*

...Just as isolated, and balkanized communities can become incubators of violent extremism, so too can prisons. If left unchecked prisons can and do become incubators of radicalization leading to violent extremism.

Another of the witnesses, Mr. Patrick Dunleavy, retired Deputy Inspector of the Criminal Intelligence Division at New York State Department of Corrections and the author of “The Fertile Soil of Jihad: Prison’s Terrorism Connection,” noted:

The prison population is vulnerable to radicalization by the same agents responsible for radicalizing Americans outside of the prison walls. Despite appearances, prison walls are porous. It is easy for outside influences to access those on the inside, and for inmates to reach from the inside out. As the former Deputy Inspector General of the Criminal Intelligence Division in the New York State Department of Corrections, I am aware that individuals and groups that subscribe to radical, and sometimes violent, ideology have made sustained efforts over several decades to target inmates for indoctrination. Some of these groups act as the certifying bodies responsible for hiring imams into the prison system, thus affording them continuous access to the prison population. In addition, the cycle of radicalization continues through post - release programs.

While some have claimed that prisoners who are converted to a radical form of Islam do not pose a threat once they are released, Dunleavy discredited this notion by addressing the dangerous post-release activity a number of prisoners have engaged in, noting that:

The task force investigation also found that although the initial exposure/conversion/indoctrination to extremist jihadi Islam may begin in prison, it often matures and deepens after release through the contacts on the outside that the inmate made while they were serving their sentences in prison. Among those contacts are transition programs, which offer former inmates assistance in finding housing or finding work. Most of the programs for Muslims transitioning out of the prison system are sponsored by mosques that are local to the prisons. Many of these mosques have extremist leanings and are known to adhere to Wahabbi ideology. In addition to the transition programs, many of the sponsoring mosques also have volunteers or formal programs to provide religious instruction inside the prisons. Thus, contact between the outreach program and the inmate has already been established by the time the prisoner is released. The prisoner is already familiar with the program’s personnel and ideology, and therefore their transition to the outside is facilitated by familiar hands.

...One of the influences in some of the homegrown terrorism cases has been the involvement, either directly or indirectly, of radical Islamist clergy. Since 9/11, the involvement of radical Islamist imams has been mentioned as a precipitating factor in the cases of Richard Reid, Jose Padilla, and others.

In 2009 the ‘Newburgh Four’; James Cromitie, Laguerre Payen, David Williams, and Onta Williams, were arrested for plotting to bomb synagogues in New York City and shoot down military aircraft with stinger missiles. All had converted to a radical form of Islam while serving time for a variety of offenses. They did not know each other while they were incarcerated, but met each other after their release, while attending a local mosque connected to a prison ministry.

FINDING #5: THE RADICALIZATION OF PRISON INMATES IS OFTEN PRECIPITATED BY THE PRESENCE OF RADICAL CLERGY OR EXTREMIST MATERIALS WITHIN THE PRISON

Witnesses at the hearing discussed the pervasive nature of radical clergy and literature throughout the prison system, and its correlation with the radicalization of prison inmates.

Dunleavy addressed this issue, stating:

...It has been confirmed that radical Islam is present in the New York State prison system and also in the New York City jails. The apparatus by which this radical form of Islam was introduced into the system was identified as consisting of multiple components, including, clergy, religious volunteers, visitors, fellow inmates and Islamic organizations from around the world that sent parcels and literature into the prisons.

...There is certainly no vetting of volunteers who provide religious instruction, and who, although not paid, wield considerable influence in the prison Muslim communities. Many such volunteers are former convicts.

Deputy Chief Downing also discussed the threat of extremist literature being disseminated throughout the prison system, noting:

Anwar al-Awlaki, a prominent United States born Islamic scholar of Yemeni descent and internet radicalizer is wanted by the United States for Terrorism prosecution. His radical literature has found its way into the prison system and has been used by known extremists to facilitate recruitment and radicalization activities within prisons.

...The spiritual philosopher of Al Qaeda, Sayyid Qutb, wrote the radical Islamist manifesto 'Ma'alim fi al-Tari'q ('Milestones Along the Road') while in an Egyptian prison. Copies of this document exist in the prison system and contribute to radicalization.

HEARING # 3: "AL-SHABAAB: RECRUITMENT AND RADICALIZATION WITHIN THE MUSLIM AMERICAN COMMUNITY AND THE THREAT TO THE HOMELAND."

This investigative hearing examining Somalia-based terrorist organization al-Shabaab Mujahideen's ongoing recruitment, radicalization and training of Muslim-Americans was the culmination of months of Committee research into a looming threat.

Since 2006, a group of American citizens, including many – though not all – who were part of the Somali-American community, have been radicalized within the United States to terrorist activity often by Shabaab recruiters or sympathizers. A Committee investigation found that more than 40 Americans have joined Shabaab in Somalia – Al Qaeda's top operational ally in East Africa – and more than 15 have been killed there, including five who were believed killed perpetrating suicide bombings. According to a Committee review of Department of Justice (DOJ) prosecutions, there are dozens of cases of defendants charged in the U.S. in connection with Shabaab or other extremist organizations in Somalia, filed in states including Minnesota, California, New Jersey, Missouri, Alabama, Virginia, Illinois, New York and Texas.

Reflecting a disturbing trend across global terrorist organizations such as Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), Shabaab leaders appear to be actively recruiting Americans, including a targeted recruitment of Americans who are not of Somali descent. In addition to Al Shabaab's growing radicalization and recruitment of Americans, the group has also actively recruited a number of Canadian citizens. The Somali communities in Minneapolis and Toronto often

maintain close ties, including familial relationships as well as cross-border commercial traffic.

The hearing also examined Shabaab's affiliation with Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) and the homeland security implications. In addition to its connections with Al Qaeda senior leadership and its recent alignment publicized in a video by Osama Bin Laden's successor Ayman al-Zawahiri, Shabaab has also developed alliances with several Al Qaeda affiliates, including Algeria's Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and Yemen's AQAP. Shabaab's broadening cooperation with AQAP is particularly troubling considering the critical threat AQAP poses to the U.S. Homeland and that organization's unwavering attempts to pursue an attack against us.

FINDING #6: THERE ARE DIRECT TIES BETWEEN AL-SHABAAB AND AL QAEDA AND ITS AFFILIATES, AND AL-SHABAAB RECRUITS ARE OFTEN INDOCTRINATED INTO AL QAEDA'S IDEOLOGY AND NETWORK

Witnesses at the hearing discussed Shabaab's ties to Al Qaeda and its affiliates, and the direct threat that such cooperation poses to the United States and its allies. One of the witnesses, Mr. Thomas Joscelyn, a Senior Fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, stated:

There is extensive evidence that Shabaab's recruiting in the West is not limited to 'nationalistic' aims. While some recruits probably do travel to Somalia to take part in a "local" (civil) war, there is always the potential for these same recruits to become indoctrinated in Shabaab's Al Qaeda-inspired ideology once they arrive there. Indeed, this has been Al Qaeda's strategy, to fold 'local' conflicts into an international jihad. Moreover, some Shabaab recruits are clearly radicalized before they even depart American soil.

...Shabaab's recruits in the West have received training from senior Al Qaeda operatives who are also members of Shabaab. Earlier this month, the Department of Justice agreed to a plea deal with a Minneapolis man named Omar Abdi Mohamed. According to a DOJ press release, Mohamed admitted that he helped Shabaab recruit Somali-Americans. The DOJ explains: 'Upon arriving in Somalia, the men resided in al-Shabaab safe-houses in Southern Somalia until constructing an al-Shabaab training camp, where they were trained. Senior members of al-Shabaab and a senior member of Al Qaeda in East Africa conducted the training.' That is, Shabaab's Minneapolis recruits were delivered to a senior Al Qaeda member for training.

Another witness who prosecuted many of the cases in Minneapolis regarding Shabaab recruitment and radicalization, Mr. William Anders Folk, a former Assistant United States Attorney for the District of Minnesota, discussed the role of Al Qaeda's underlying ideology in the radicalization of Shabaab's recruits, stating:

In addition to recruiting by al-Shabaab as an organization and by individuals on behalf of al-Shabaab, religious figures such as Anwar al-Awlaki have provided potential recruits with ideological underpinnings for individuals to fight in Somalia on behalf of al-Shabaab. As has been publicly reported, al-Awlaki's 'Constants on the Path to jihad' has provided recruits and potential recruits with an ideological framework, however distorted and incorrect it may be, to fight on behalf of al-Shabaab in Somalia.

FINDING #7: MORE THAN 40 MUSLIM-AMERICANS WHO HAVE BEEN RADICALIZED AND RECRUITED BY AL-SHABAAB MAY POSE A DIRECT THREAT TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY OF THE UNITED STATES AND ITS ALLIES

More than 40 Americans and a number of Canadian citizens have joined Shabaab in Somalia. While many believe those individuals have been motivated solely to fight within Somalia, the dangerous possibility remains that they may in fact return to the United States or Canada, with the intention of perpetrating terrorist activity. One purported American suicide bomber in a “martyrdom” tape even urged fellow radicalized violent jihadis in the West to perpetrate stay-at-home terror attacks. One of the witnesses, Mr. Ahmed Hussen, the Canadian Somali Congress’s National President, stated:

It is very disturbing to us as Canadian citizens to see the children of those who fled the civil war in Somalia return to a country they barely know and contribute to its misery. There is an additional concern that these individuals would come back to threaten and harm Canada, the very country that has given us peace, security and opportunity.

Folk also discussed the danger in Shabaab recruits returning to the United States, noting:

It is impossible to predict with certainty what, if anything, and who, if anyone, will come to the United States after training and indoctrination by al-Shabaab. It is obvious, however, that individuals who are trained, indoctrinated and deployed in combat by al-Shabaab have learned how to carry out acts of lethal violence. Additionally, it is clear that the ideology espoused by al-Shabaab echoes that of al-Qaeda. This combination of ability and ideology illustrates the threat that is posed by even one al-Shabaab veteran residing in the United States. The ability to prevent or detect such a person from entering the United States or carrying-out any terrorist acts in the United States requires continued vigilance of the group’s activities in Somalia, but also to ensure that supporters or sympathizers within the United States are targeted for investigation.

FINDING #8: THE COMMITTEE’S HEARINGS ON THE RADICALIZATION OF MUSLIM-AMERICANS HAVE EMPOWERED MUSLIMS TO EFFECTIVELY ADDRESS THIS ISSUE

Despite criticism directed against the Committee’s careful and thorough investigative hearings, they have liberated and empowered Muslim-Americans who had been intimidated by leaders in their own communities but are now able to come forward. This point was reinforced by the Canadian Somali Congress’s Ahmed Hussen, who said:

I would like to close by saying that these hearings are extremely important to us. They empower us, and they remove the stigma in our community that prevents us from talking about these issues that are really important to our community. These hearings are very empowering.

HEARING # 4: “HOMEGROWN TERRORISM: THE THREAT TO MILITARY COMMUNITIES INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.”

The terrorist threat to U.S. military troops and their families within the United States is on the rise, which the historic Dec. 7, 2011 joint-investigative hearing on radicalization by the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee probed comprehensively.

The only successful terror attacks on the homeland resulting in deaths since 9/11 have been against the military: at Fort Hood, where 13 soldiers and civilians were murdered in an active-shooter attack allegedly by Army Maj. Nidal Hasan, and at a Little Rock recruiting center, where Army Pvt. William Andrew Long was fatally shot point-blank by radicalized homegrown Islamist Carlos Bledsoe. The Fort Hood attack was not an anomaly; rather it was part of Al Qaeda's two-decade success at infiltrating the U.S. military for terrorism – an effort that is increasing in scope and threat.

FINDING #9: THE TERRORIST THREAT TO MILITARY COMMUNITIES IS SEVERE AND ON THE RISE Military communities in the U.S. have become the most sought-after targets of violent Islamist extremists seeking to kill Americans in their homeland. Paul Stockton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs, said in his prepared statement:

The terrorist threat to our military communities is serious, and will remain so for years to come.

....Over the last decade, a plurality of these domestic violent extremists chose to target the Department of Defense (DoD), making military communities the target of choice for homegrown terrorists. Fourteen of seventeen Americans killed in the homeland by domestic violent extremists have been DoD personnel.

The Department of Defense faces a special challenge in this regard. Al Qaeda and its affiliates seek to inspire and instruct U.S. military personnel and other radicalized U.S. citizens to conduct "lone actor" attacks on U.S. military targets. These adherents are, as Deputy National Security Advisor John Brennan has said, "individuals, sometimes with little or no direct physical contact with al Qaeda, who have succumbed to [al Qaeda's] hateful ideology and who have engaged in, or facilitated, terrorist activities here in the United States ... and we have seen the tragic results, with the murder of a military recruiter in Arkansas two years ago and the attack on our servicemen and women at Fort Hood."

Army Lt. Col. Reid L. Sawyer, the Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, also emphasized this point:

As the decade of conflict has evolved, the predominant target of choice for homegrown terrorists in the United States has become the U.S. military. Nearly 50 percent of all plots in the homeland since 9/11 (41 of 87 plots) considered targeting U.S. military personnel. In one sense, the military focus is perhaps an obvious choice by those aspiring to participate in the global jihad. To an Al Qaeda adherent, the U.S. military represents the manifestation of American foreign policy more so than any other target choice as the military—in Al Qaeda's narrative—is responsible for the oppression and humiliation of Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen, among other locations.

...For many homegrown terrorists, attacking the military may well represent a choice that is —easier// to overcome in terms of the moral barriers of targeting symbols of U.S. foreign policy rather than the shopping mall, restaurants or public spaces in which he or she may have frequented with his or her friends. The social distance between a terrorist’s individual experiences and the military is in most cases far greater than that of other potential targets, making it easier to objectify military targets. Abdul-Latif, the perpetrator of the planned attack against the Seattle Military Entrance Processing Station captured this sentiment best: ‘The key thing to remember here is, is we are not targeting anybody innocent — that means old people, women out of uniform, any children. Anything. Just people who wear the green for the kaffir Army, that’s who we’re going after.’

...Finally, while any Al Qaeda inspired attack within the United States is a high-profile event for both the violent extremists and the citizens of this nation, successful attacks against the military in the homeland represent a particularly unique event.

FINDING #10: THE “INSIDER” THREAT TO MILITARY COMMUNITIES IS A SIGNIFICANT AND POTENTIALLY DEVASTATING DEVELOPMENT

The attack in 2009 by Maj. Nidal Hasan, the Army psychiatrist who killed 13 and injured dozens during an attack on the Soldier Readiness Center at Fort Hood in Texas, illustrated the dangerous “insider” threat posed to military communities by individuals within the U.S. military who may have been radicalized by Al Qaeda ideology or propaganda. This threat, unfortunately, existed long before the attack for which Hasan stands accused.

Assistant Secretary Stockton said:

Given the adversary’s emphasis on recruiting U.S. military personnel to attack our communities from within, the Department has taken numerous actions to broaden its approach to force protection beyond its traditional focus on external threats.

Lt. Col. Sawyer also discussed this issue and how severe this particular threat is:

Any examination of Al Qaeda’s targeting of homeland military forces must include a discussion of what has colloquially become known as the insider threat. The effect of these actors on the military is perhaps more divisive and damaging than attacks against military targets staged by external actors. At the tactical level, insiders also have the potential to do more harm than external threats given their knowledge of installations, schedules and ability to gain access to areas that would be restricted to civilians. At the organizational level, insider threats tear at the social fabric of an organization and make people question the patriotism of those serving next to them. At the strategic level, these attacks provide Al Qaeda with immense propaganda value and, in one sense, these actors are the ultimate prize for Al Qaeda. The rejection of the values that their uniforms stood for and an abandonment of the oaths they swore validate Al Qaeda’s narrative in a way that no other domestic, homegrown radicalized individual could hope to achieve.

FINDING #11: POLITICAL CORRECTNESS CONTINUES TO STIFLE THE MILITARY’S ABILITY TO EFFECTIVELY UNDERSTAND AND COUNTER THE THREAT

Despite the growing problem of violent Islamist radicalization within the United States, many government officials appear reticent to publicly acknowledge the ideological driver behind al Qaeda's radicalization and recruitment of American citizens. The military's failure to identify and acknowledge the threat from Islamist extremism was tragically illustrated by the Fort Hood attacks and its failure to address Maj. Hasan's overt radicalization.

Assistant Secretary Stockton defended the military's persistent refusal to identify the Islamist ideology motivating the terrorist attacks, per the Obama Administration's guidance:

When it comes to defining the enemy, this Administration wishes to avoid imprecise terminology that may cause confusion and may unjustifiably give credence to the falsehood – despite our best intentions – that we are waging a war on Islam.

Mr. Daris Long, the father of the late Army Pvt. William Andrew Long, who was shot and killed in a 2009 terrorist attack on a military recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas, said:

My faith in government is diminished. It invents euphemisms instead of using accurate language while the perpetrators speak freely using the very words deemed offensive to justify their actions. Clarity is absent. Little Rock is a drive by and Fort Hood is just workplace violence: the truth is denied.

...The political correctness exhibited by the government over offending anyone in admitting the truth about Islamic extremism, masked alarm bells that were going off. Warnings were ignored, Maj. Nidal Hassan was able to openly praise the Little Rock shootings in front of fellow Army officers and then commit his own jihad.

...The blatant masking and disregard of the facts not only endanger American citizens of non-Muslim faith but also those of Muslim heritage who do not adhere to the extremist beliefs demonstrated by a militant and political form of jihad.

FINDING #12: THE ADMINISTRATION CHOSE POLITICAL CORRECTNESS OVER ACCURATELY LABELING AND IDENTIFYING CERTAIN TERRORIST ATTACKS APPROPRIATELY, THEREBY DENYING PURPLE HEART MEDALS TO TROOPS KILLED AND WOUNDED IN DOMESTIC TERROR ATTACKS

The June 2009 shooting by Carlos Bledsoe (aka Abdulhakim Muhammad, a U.S. citizen and Muslim convert who perpetrated the attack on the Army recruiting office in Little Rock) illustrated to other homegrown terrorists the potential of "soft target" military recruiting centers as valid targets. Bledsoe specifically targeted the U.S. military to avenge what he believed was its mistreatment of Muslims. He also had traveled to Yemen and was radicalized to Al Qaeda's violent Islamist extremist ideology.

However, despite his clear ties to terrorism and ideological motivations, Bledsoe was tried in a civilian state court rather than in U.S. District Court under federal terrorism charges. In another glaring instance of Al Qaeda-inspired homegrown terrorism, the government also neglected to indict Maj. Nidal Hasan on any terrorism-related charges, considering the case to be an example of "workplace violence" despite his reported email communications with AQAP operational leader, the since-slain American terrorist Anwar al-Awlaki.

The Army and Department of Defense subsequently denied to the killed and wounded of Little Rock and Fort Hood an honor bestowed on the military victims who perished or were wounded

inside the Pentagon on 9/11: the Purple Heart medal.

Daris Long discussed this inconsistency and the need to identify and prosecute terror cases as such:

In an attack that resulted in the first death and wounding of American soldiers on US soil since 9/11 action by the Department of Justice is absent. Little Rock has morphed into nothing more than a "drive by" shooting. Abdulhakim Muhammad's jihad in America has been downplayed by the federal government and the Mainstream media causing irreparable change to the families involved as well as flat out lying to the American people.

...I am convinced the government's position is to deny Little Rock was a terrorist attack. By not being open and transparent, despite promises to do so, to this administrations shame two soldiers have been abandoned on a battlefield in the advancement of a political agenda.

...November 5, 2009, an attack took place at Fort Hood. In each instance, a clear tie to Yemen, but still no Federal indictments. My take is that if you plan and/or fail in a terrorist attack, you will be charged, but if you kill in this country under the banner of jihad, we're told it isn't terrorism and federal judicial response is neither confirmed nor denied.

THE WAY FORWARD

While the Committee's investigative hearings examining Muslim-American radicalization clearly have had a significant and beneficial impact in forcing an open debate about the growing issue of radicalization within the United States, this problem is far from resolved.

According to the results of a 2011 Pew poll, 16% of American Muslims had a favorable or only somewhat unfavorable view of Al Qaeda. Further, 13% of American Muslims believed that suicide bombings or other violence against civilians, to defend Islam from its enemies, was often, sometimes or rarely justified. Pew stated that there were 2.7 million American Muslims. That means that there are approximately 440,000 American Muslims who view Al Qaeda as only a somewhat unfavorable organization, and 357,000 who believe that killing civilians in the name of Islam can in some cases be justified. These numbers are startling and exposed a dangerous disconnect between a number of American Muslims and the democratic values cherished by Western nations.

The radicalization of Muslim-Americans by the violent Islamist extremist ideology promulgated by Al Qaeda and its affiliates is a problem that the United States cannot continue to simply ignore or deflect. Unfortunately, it appears that that within the United States, political correctness has prevented many from sufficiently acknowledging and tackling this dangerous problem. We continue to face an unwavering threat, and must be fully aware that homegrown radicalization is part of Al Qaeda's strategy to continue attacking the United States.

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