



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Homegrown Terrorism: The Threat to Military Communities Inside the United States

Joint Hearing Between Senate and House Homeland Security Committees
Chairman Joe Lieberman
December 7

Good morning. I too want to welcome everyone to this historic, first ever joint hearing between the House and Senate Homeland Security Committees. My thanks to Chairman King for proposing this hearing. There is no subject that should unite us more across partisan or ideological lines than the threat Islamist extremists pose to our homeland and our people.

Today we focus on the threat of violent Islamist extremism to members of the military at home. The men and women who have sworn to defend our democracy expect a respite from wartime conditions when they are home from battle. But the record shows that that the United States military has become a direct target of violent Islamist extremism here in the U.S., and that means soldiers and perhaps their families are potentially vulnerable at work and at rest, in a military setting or a civilian one, on a base or off a base, at a recruiting station or a military hospital.

The only Americans who have lost their lives in terrorist attacks in our homeland since 9/11 have been killed at U.S. military facilities.

Private William Long – who was killed at a Little Rock recruiting station June 4, 2009, and whose father will testify today – was the first. The other 13 were murdered on November 5, 2009, during the Fort Hood attack. In addition, two soldiers were killed at camp Pennsylvania in Kuwait in 2003 by a fellow service member, and about 50 were wounded at Fort Hood and in Kuwait.

It will probably surprise most people to learn that, since 2001, law enforcement has thwarted and prosecuted more than 30 plots or attacks against military targets. According to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), that represents more than half of the 54 homegrown jihadist plots and attacks that occurred between 9/11 and December 4, 2011.

The stark reality, therefore, is that the American service member is increasingly in the terrorists' scope and not just overseas in a traditional war setting. I look forward to asking our Defense Department witnesses - Paul Stockton, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Homeland Defense and Americas' Security Affairs; Jim Stuteville, a senior Army advisor on counterintelligence operations; and Lieutenant Colonel Reid Sawyer, Director of the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point - if they agree with this characterization of the threat, what they are doing to address it, and what the future of military security looks like.

Our government's counterterrorism capabilities will continue to be the best means of uncovering plots against military installations and personnel and saving lives. And this means the Department of Defense and the FBI – which has primary responsibility for domestic extremism and terrorism -- must open their lines of communication to an unprecedented degree.

Law enforcement agencies in communities across the country have been and must also continue to reach out to Muslim American communities to enable them to help our government meet this threat that comes from a small but deadly number of individuals who are radicalizing or have already radicalized to violent Islamist extremism.

Finally, our government and especially the Defense Department - must recognize who the enemy is – not a vague notion of violent extremism, but violent Islamist extremism specifically.

One of the unfortunate lessons of the past decade is that violent Islamist extremism will undoubtedly threaten us for years to come both at home and abroad, and its targets will be both civilians and military personnel. We have weakened our enemies but they are not vanquished. Protecting Americans, in general, and our service members in particular, requires continued preventive, offensive, and defensive action.