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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY**

**“The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and  
the Community’s Response”**

I appreciate the opportunity to add to a discussion on an important topic that affects all of our communities. The Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department has long been a leader in the development of relationships with the various ethnic, cultural and religious communities that thrive in the Los Angeles area. Nowhere is that relationship more positive than that which exists between my agency and the American Muslim Community. We have established strong bonds through continuing outreach and physical presence at events important to the community and law enforcement.

I would caution that to comment only on the extent of radicalization in the American Muslim Community may be viewed as singling out a particular section of our nation. This makes a false assumption that any particular religion or group is more prone to radicalization than others. According to the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC), utilizing information provided by respected organizations such as the Congressional Research Service, the Heritage Foundation, and Southern Poverty Law Center, there have been 77 total terror plots by domestic, non-Muslim perpetrators since 9/11. In comparison, there have been 41 total plots by both domestic *and international* Muslim perpetrators during the same period. Reports indicate that American Muslims helped foil seven of the last ten plots propagated by Al-Qaeda within the United States. According to MPAC, evidence clearly indicates a general rise in violent extremism *across ideologies*. Clearly, we should be examining radicalization as an issue that affects all groups regardless of religion.

It is counterproductive to building trust when individuals or groups claim that Islam supports terrorism. This plays directly into the terrorist’s propaganda that the West’s “war on terror” is actually a “war against Islam.” It is critical to build mutually respectful relationships with American Muslim communities and endeavor to work together to protect all Americans whether locally or internationally.

Since we are gathered to share information about the American Muslim Community and its response to radicalization, I can deliver very good news. The Muslim Community in Los Angeles is an active participant in the securing of our Homeland. Whether as new immigrants or multi-generational citizens, the vast majority of Muslim community members within my jurisdiction is fiercely proud of their American identity and display their patriotism on a daily basis.

When I made critical outreach to the community after 9/11, I was overwhelmed by the number of Muslims who, while under threat from misinformed sources, were ready and willing to connect with law enforcement to help keep the peace.

On September 13, 2001, I convened a meeting led by then Governor Gray Davis, Mayor James Hahn, and Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, in addition to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Interfaith Council. The message to all our residents was to refrain from invoking religious assumptions regarding the 9-11 terrorist attacks on America. A few criminals with a twisted and corrupted view of religious doctrine had perpetrated universally condemned crimes against our citizens. They did not represent the vast majority of American Muslims any more than Timothy McVeigh represented his community.

Shortly after the July 7, 2005 transit bombings in London, the Muslim American Homeland Security Congress (MAHSC) was formed in Los Angeles County to engage the Muslim community in our efforts to counter violent extremism. MAHSC is comprised of leaders from the religious, business, professional and academic centers of the American Muslim Community in Los Angeles. MAHSC supports the efforts of our Muslim Community Affairs Unit (MCA) made up of Arabic-speaking Muslim deputy sheriffs and key leaders of the Sheriff's Department. Together, we engage in community forums and participate in events to discuss issues that are common to both the community and law enforcement. MAHSC provides support to the homeland security efforts of my Department and has helped in minimizing isolation and misunderstanding between the community and law enforcement.

American Muslim community leaders within Los Angeles have not hesitated to put themselves in potentially uncomfortable positions to interact with law enforcement. Late in 2010, MPAC enthusiastically responded to a request to speak at the annual Radicalization and Homegrown Violent Extremism Conference which is coordinated by my Department. Attended by more than 200 law enforcement personnel, Executive Director Salam Al-Marayati and Communications Director Edina Lekovic subjected themselves to an intense period of questions and answers from the audience regarding Islam,

radicalization and terrorism. Due to their courage and willingness to answer any question presented, the evaluation of their performance was overwhelmingly positive.

Our Sheriff's Department has a history of working closely with all the diverse communities in Los Angeles County. Our Department's efforts in community outreach and interaction is a nationally recognized model that has proven successful in countering potentially violent extremist activity. In particular, the success of our relationships with American Muslims residing within Los Angeles County has been examined by a multitude of agencies across the nation as well as globally. The Sheriff's Department outreach programs are not linked to counter-terrorism or intelligence units. Our outreach is real and genuine. We are only interested in building long-term, trusted relationships with our communities. Where those relationships have existed with no underlying intent, critical information has been gained and shared with appropriate partners.

As the community leaders who have engaged with our Department share their experiences with their contacts across the nation, interest in our program has skyrocketed. In the past six months, Sergeant Mike Abdeen and Deputy Sheriff Morsi, of the Muslim Community Affairs Unit, have made presentations to the National Sheriff's

Association Conference, the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC), the United States Attorney General's Office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and have recently been invited to speak at the National Counter-Terrorism Center (NCTC). Their ability to create and maintain mutually beneficial relationships between the Muslim Community and the Sheriff's Department is nothing short of remarkable. One visibly striking example of success is the reception received by a uniformed deputy sheriff driving a marked Sheriff's patrol vehicle to events at our local Islamic Centers. Our personnel are not seen as a threat or person to be avoided but rather a pleasant and welcome part of the community.

We are founding members of the Law Enforcement Outreach Coordinators Group in Los Angeles which includes the Los Angeles Police Department, the City of Los Angeles, the California Emergency Management Agency, the FBI, United States Attorney General's Office, the Transportation Security Administration, and our most supportive federal partner, the Department of Homeland Security.

All of these agencies recognize that you cannot arrest or enforce your way out of the radicalization issue. The outreach to community members and the building of relationships will lead to a trusted network for sharing of information and contacts.

These relationships are crucial to mitigate a threat, or more importantly, *recognize* the threat at a stage where a person, or a group, on the wrong path can be righted.

I have long recognized that law enforcement alone cannot generate the necessary intelligence and response to the presence of violent extremism without the cooperation and support of the American Muslim Community. According to the Institute for Homeland Security Solutions report "Building on Clues: Examining Successes and Failures in Detecting U.S. Terrorist Plots 1999-2009," fully 40 percent of all extremist plots were thwarted as a result of tips from the public and informants. There is no better example than that of Christmas bomber Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab's father, Umaru, who was so worried about his son's radicalization that he felt compelled to report it to proper authorities (Nigerian Embassy). I believe that Umaru Abdulmutallab is not the exception but the rule for most of American Muslims. When confronted with a situation over which they have lost control, most parents will find a way to intervene. It is up to us to provide the channel for that information to flow with dignity and respect for the person reporting.

In America, we are obligated to protect all citizens and their respective religions, and to effectively detect and find extremists. Police leaders must have the trust and understanding of all communities who are represented in their jurisdictions. The Muslim Community is no less or more important than others as no one can predict with complete accuracy who or what will pose the next threat against our nation. Simply put, police need public participation, and to accomplish that, strategies such as public-trust policing need to be a priority in our nation.

To maintain a safe society free of violent extremism, police leaders must apply public-trust policing techniques that lead to appropriate channels of communication and participation with the public. Los Angeles County has aggressively pursued a public-

trust policing program by building relationships with all faiths to achieve interfaith harmony. Los Angeles County has many interfaith efforts; the Sheriff's Department developed an Interfaith Advisory Council consisting of more than 300 Rabbis, Priests, Imams, Ministers, Monks, and faith leaders of all religions.

With more than one billion Muslims worldwide, outreach to that particular community cannot remain a local matter. The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department strives to build strong relationships with government professionals from all over the world including those with significant Muslim populations. I have traveled extensively throughout the world with the purpose of creating a network

of policing and governmental professionals who feel comfortable sharing best practices to overcome common problems. To further solidify international relationships, members of the Sheriff's Department have embarked upon professional diplomacy efforts to countries which include Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Gulf States, Mexico, China, Taiwan, South Korea, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia, the Netherlands, Canada, Morocco, Singapore, Armenia and Great Britain. The investment of time and effort in the professional diplomacy arena pays tremendous dividends when international cooperation is necessary.

In traditional law enforcement, more money is spent on the response to incidents than in prevention or mitigation efforts. I believe that those efforts should be equalized. With the prevention and educational efforts being pursued by our outreach programs, we think the smart money is on the front end. If you can turn anger into understanding and violence into civic activism, there would be no necessity for response.

At this time in our history, with billions of dollars being spent on wars against terror, our nation should follow President Obama's example and serve as instruments of goodwill to Muslims throughout the world.

It is my belief that the average American has the potential to be our best ambassador of goodwill, however, Senators, Representatives, Governors, Mayors, Boards of Supervisors, Sheriffs, and Police Chiefs must set the example with a desire to visit Islamic centers and communicate with Muslims in the quest for a better understanding of Islam. Our enemies cannot thrive or even survive when a majority of people share common goals and pledge to be an asset to each other in the fight to counter violent extremism.

As a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, I would like to commend Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano for her initiative on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE). I dedicate myself and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to continue our efforts to make our citizens safer. I look forward to answering any questions you may have. Thank you.

Attachments (2)



**LAW ENFORCEMENT INTERACTION WITH THE  
MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY**

**The development of Muslim community outreach/History and achievements**

- July 2005, Sheriff Baca establishes (MAHSC) the Muslim American Homeland Security Congress. The first of its kind in the nation. MAHSC is a non-political, non-governmental, non-religious and non-profit organization. It was established with the mission to foster education and understanding between the Muslim Community and the Sheriff's Department to protect and defend the United States of America and to prevent terrorism and any acts of prejudice. Members of MAHSC include the following organizations that represent the Muslim Community in the southern California area:
  - Bilal Islamic Center
  - Council on American Islamic Relations-LA Chapter
  - Council on Pakistani American Affairs
  - Iranian-American Muslim Association of North America
  - Islamic Center of Hawthorne
  - Islamic Center of San Gabriel Valley
  - Islamic Center of South Bay
  - Islamic Center of Southern California
  - Islamic Shura Council of Southern California
  - Muslim American Society
  - Muslim Public Affairs Council
  - Omar Ibn Al Khattab Foundation
- July 2007, Sheriff Baca establishes a Muslim Community Outreach Program with a full time Muslim Sergeant dedicated to working with MAHSC board members and directed to restoring community trust, building bridges and to develop educational programs that will benefit the Muslim community as well as the Sheriff's personnel.
- August 2008, The Muslim Community Affairs Unit was established and staffed by one full time Sergeant, one full time Deputy and four part time Deputy Sheriffs to assist in the development of the outreach program. The MCA unit's mission is to build a stronger relationship with the Muslim community for better understanding and cooperation with law enforcement.
- September 2008, A Muslim youth program was developed with the purpose of educating the youth about law enforcement and engaging them with meaningful and productive activities.
- October 2008, A training program was developed for recruits in the academy to learn about Islam and provides cultural awareness issues when working with the Muslim Community. The material used for the training was provided and taught by community organizations and community volunteers.

- October 2009, Law enforcement outreach coordinators group was established under the guidance of the MCA unit with the purpose of coordinating the efforts of outreach among the different law enforcement agencies. The group includes Local, State and Federal Agencies, all of which are interested in building bridges and improving the cooperation of the Muslim community with their respective agencies. (LAPD, LA City, CALEMA, FBI, DHS, US Attorney, TSA, USCIS)
- May 2010, Young Muslim American Leaders Advisory Council (YoungMALAC) was established with the purpose of engaging young Muslim professional adults with the Sheriff's Department and to encourage civic engagement with the community at large while receiving recommendations on activities and possible policy changes from young professionals. YoungMALAC consists of 12 board members with background and education in public policy, law, medicine, business and education.
- July 2010, The MCA launches a website with the objective of educating the community on the outreach efforts & social services and events carried by the unit and educating the Sheriff's department personnel on the Muslim community.
- December 2010, The MCA unit completes a training video titled "Law Enforcement Interaction with the Muslim Community". This training video was produced in partnership with the Muslim Public Affairs Council in Los Angeles.
- January 2011, Jail/Custody Outreach program was established with the purpose of connecting jail inmates with support units and organizations upon release from custody while ensuring that proper non-violent teachings are taking place in the jails.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's experience with the Muslim Community in the LA area, although challenging at times, has been very rewarding. The level of trust and cooperation members of the Sheriff's Department continue to experience has been very good and continues to improve on a daily basis.

Members of the MCA unit and the department in general have been invited and have attended many social, religious, and educational events to include holiday festivities, Ramadan Iftars and family celebrations. The Mosques and Islamic centers in the LA area have been open and were made available to any member of law enforcement to visit and to attend any cultural or religious event.

The MCA unit and the Sheriff have hosted several town hall meetings with the Muslim Community to answer questions and to address concerns. Some of the educational programs that were provided to the community include:

- Domestic Violence
- Gang activities and awareness
- Youth and teens driving education
- Terrorism

- Narcotics education and awareness
- Identity theft avoidance and awareness

### **Success stories**

We measure our success by the trust that we enjoy with community leaders, members of the community in general, and the organizations that represent the community. Sheriff's cars and uniform personnel are no longer seen as a threat to the community in Los Angeles County but rather a pleasant and welcomed part of the community and the Islamic centers.

The "Law Enforcement interaction with the Muslim Community" training video was produced in partnership with the Muslim Public Affairs Council, an organization that represents a large number of the Muslim community nationwide. Several video shoot locations, staffing, and script were provided by MPAC and members of the Muslim Community.

Many tips, leads, and reports of suspicious activities were provided by either Muslim community members or organizations. These reports of possible suspicious activities would not have been communicated to law enforcement personnel if we did not have the trust and bridges built. The trust that was earned, provided the mechanism for the community to communicate its concern and therefore reporting the criminal activity.

The establishment of the Young Muslim American Leaders Advisory Council, the activities sponsored by the Sheriff's Department, and the mutual support of the Islamic centers and the families of the youth involved is a tool and a method of countering violent extremism through trust, education, and cooperation between law enforcement and the Muslim community.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Custody outreach program in our jails is not only a bridge building for inmates with the outside world but also is a counter radicalization effort by ensuring that proper teachings of Islam are checked by having the right educators, material and well qualified and properly credentialed chaplains and Imams. The process would not have been possible without the cooperation of the local Muslim community by providing volunteers and vetted religious texts that will not incite violence but rather teach the proper peaceful message of the religion.

### **Lessons Learned**

Our experience continues to teach us that implementing community trust policing methods is the best way to succeed and gain the cooperation of any community you serve and work with. The Muslim Community is not different than all the other communities we serve daily. Build trust, solicit cooperation and establish methods of communication with the community and the result will be crime reporting, reporting of suspicious activities, and countering violent extremism at all levels.

Attachment 1

# LOS ANGELES COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

## ADVISORY COUNCILS

1. AAAC: American Allegiance Advisory Council (Lebanese)
2. AASAC: Armenian American Sheriff's Advisory Council
3. BASAC: Bangladesh American Sheriff's Advisory Council
4. LASACCA: Los Angeles Sheriff's Advisory Council of Cambodian Americans
5. LACASAC: Los Angeles Chinese American Sheriff's Advisory Council
6. CLSAC: Concerned Leaders Sheriff's Advisory Council
7. DFCSAC: Drug Free Community Sheriff's Advisory Council
8. DCSAC: Druze Community Sheriff's Advisory Council
9. EOBSAC: Emergency Operations Bureau Sheriff's Advisory Council
10. EASAC: European American Sheriff's Advisory Council
11. ECSAC: Executive Clergy Sheriff's Advisory Council
12. GLBTAC: Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender Advisory Council
13. GASAC: Greek American Sheriff's Advisory Council
14. HASAC: Hispanic American Sheriff's Advisory Council
15. HSAC: Homeland Security Advisory Council
16. IASAC: Indo American Sheriff's Advisory Council
17. LAIASAC: Los Angeles Iranian American Sheriff's Advisory Council
18. JASAC: Jewish American Sheriff's Advisory Council
19. KASC: Korean American Scholarship Council
20. LAKASAC: Los Angeles Korean American Sheriff's Advisory Council
21. LAKASA-CCI: Los Angeles Korean American Sheriff's Advisory Central Chapter
22. MCSAC: Multi-Culture Sheriff's Advisory Council
23. MAHSC: Muslim American Homeland Security Congress
24. PASAC: Pakistan American Sheriff's Advisory Council
25. LAPASAC: Los Angeles Persian American Sheriff's Advisory Council
26. PSAC: Professional Services Advisory Council
27. RSSAC: Russian Speaking Sheriff's Advisory Council
28. SAASAC: South Asian American Sheriff's Advisory Council
29. SCLAC: Sheriff's Community Liaison Advisory Council
30. TASAC: Thai American Sheriff's Advisory Council
31. YESAC: Youth Education Sheriff's Advisory Council