



Committee on
HOMELAND SECURITY
Chairman Michael McCaul

Opening Statement

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)
Committee on Homeland Security**

“The Rise of Radicalization: Is the U.S. Government Failing to Counter International and Domestic Terrorism?”

Remarks as Prepared

Our Nation is grappling with a new wave of terror.

From the suburbs of Massachusetts to the streets of South Carolina, we have apprehended a string of assailants who—while living among us—plotted to cause mass harm in the name of their hateful ideology. Just days ago U.S. authorities disrupted an ISIS-linked plot to attack an American university with assault rifles and improvised explosive devices. The suspect planned to execute students and broadcast it live on the internet. And last month our nation reacted with horror as another extremist launched an attack on black worshippers in a Charleston church.

Whether inspired by Islamist terror or white supremacy, these assailants share one trait in common: they want to attack the innocent, intimidate our population, and coerce us in order to achieve their insidious goals. Both international and domestic extremist groups are seeking to radicalize our citizens. And they have begun to master social media as a recruitment tool, placing people on a path to violence at alarming speed. But we cannot bow down in the face of terror, and we must refuse to live at the mercy of fanatics. That is why we are here today: to confront the dangers we face, identify gaps in our defenses, and counter the viral spread of violent extremism.

Americans are worried about a heightened threat environment and for good reason. The number of post-9/11 homegrown terror plots in the United States has surged. In fact, there have been more U.S.-based terror plots in the first half of 2015 than any full year since 9/11. In particular, Islamist terror groups are on the march. The attack disrupted this week marks the 50th ISIS-linked terror plot against the Western world since early last year—and the 12th inside America.

These fanatics have warped a peaceful religion into deceitful propaganda, designed to convince vulnerable young people to embrace inhuman barbarism. Their success at recruiting from within our own communities cannot be ignored. Since the beginning of 2014, we have arrested or charged more

than 60 ISIS-inspired suspects in 19 states, and the FBI says it now has opened ISIS-related investigations in every single state. In just the past few weeks, we have disrupted heinous plots to behead law enforcement officers, to detonate explosives in New York City, and to conduct mass shootings of Americans. All of the attack plotters were U.S. citizens.

Extremists have also lured hundreds of Americans to try and join them on the battlefield in Syria—and at least one has already returned to our country and was arrested earlier this year while planning a terrorist attack on a U.S. military base.

I commend the FBI, Homeland Security, and State and local law enforcement for disrupting so many of these cases, but we are nowhere near close to reducing the threat. We are living in a new age of peer-to-peer terrorism. Eighty percent of the ISIS-inspired Americans who have been arrested were recruited by the terrorist group over social media or engaged in online communications sympathetic to it. This is how extremism goes viral: online and out-of-sight, until it's almost too late.

But while we spend billions of dollars to detect and disrupt terror attacks, we have dedicated few resources toward combating the radicalization at the root of terror. That is what countering violent extremism—or “CVE”—is all about. It is about warning communities, helping them spot signs of radicalization, training State and local law enforcement, combating extremist propaganda, and developing “off-ramps” to radicalization so we have an alternative to simply arresting young people who are preyed upon and recruited by terrorists. This is the crucial “prevention” aspect of counterterrorism.

Sadly, while extremist recruiters are moving at broadband speed, we are moving at bureaucratic speed. The Administration has not appointed a lead agency in charge of CVE, and few resources or full-time personnel are even allocated to it. Our Committee asked the top agencies responsible for CVE how much money and how many people they have assigned to the problem. They could only identify around \$15 million being spent and around 2 dozen people working full-time to combating domestic radicalization. That's it.

That means we've arrested twice as many ISIS recruits in the United States this year than there are full-time officials working to prevent ISIS from radicalizing Americans in the first place. In a high-threat environment, this is unacceptable.

Following this hearing today, our Committee will take up a bill crafted to elevate, accelerate, and streamline the Department of Homeland Security's CVE efforts to tackle both international and domestic terrorist recruitment and radicalization.

It is time for us to come together on this issue in bipartisan fashion. Ranking Member Thompson has agreed with me in the past that DHS “has a vital role to play” in CVE and made a point I find compelling: “Prevention is likely to be more cost effective than surveillance, trials, or wars.”

I thank our witnesses for joining us, and I hope they will illuminate the gaps in our defenses and the importance of ramping up our efforts to counter violent extremism.

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