

Ranking Member Kathleen Rice Opening Statement

Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee

“The Future of Counterterrorism: Addressing the Evolving Threat to Domestic Security”

Tuesday, February 28, 2017

As we examine the future of counterterrorism, I think it is important to step back and consider just how much the threat of terrorism has evolved in the past 10 or 20 years. Terrorists today are not leaving our borders, undergoing training in another country, and returning to the U.S. to commit attacks. Terrorists no longer need to seek financing from terrorist organizations, nor do these individuals need the plan or permission of a terrorist group or a particular leader.

More and more terrorists can be inspired by propaganda and rhetoric spewed over the Internet. Lone actors - people who are self-radicalized and may not appear on a particular watchlist or be flagged at the border – present an especially difficult task for our law enforcement officials.

But the Internet is not the only avenue to radicalization. Charged public rhetoric can be a factor, including from our own President. We’ve heard reports that ISIS refers to President Trump’s travel ban as “The Blessed Ban.” They point to the ban as proof that the U.S. is at war with Islam and the Muslim world.

I think it’s important to recognize that words matter – particularly when we have a group like ISIS with such sophisticated communications operations. The words we use do matter. Calling for a complete and total ban on Muslims entering the U.S., or going out of your way to call it “radical *Islamic* terrorism” – those words play right into our enemies’ hands, and do nothing to help our counterterrorism efforts.

Additionally, I’m particularly concerned right now about the recent wave of bomb threats made nationwide to Jewish Community Centers, or JCCs. Last week, I joined several Members of Congress in urging the Department of Homeland Security, The Department of Justice, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation to fully investigate these threats.

Over the last two decades, JCCs and Jewish institutions have several times been the target of domestic terrorist attacks. We must do more to protect these and similar social, recreational and cultural facilities.

To that end, I would ask Chairman King that this subcommittee commit to examining the work of DHS and FBI to help protect and harden JCCs and other religious institutions from terrorist threats.

The threat landscape is ever evolving, and we have a responsibility to evolve with it, and to confront the threat of terrorism in all its forms.