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**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Subcommittee on Oversight, Management, and Efficiency
Hearing - Identifying the Enemy: Radical Islamist Terror
September 22, 2016**

Today, we are hearing from the Department of Homeland Security and a private sector panel on the federal government's efforts to Counter Violent Extremism. The threat from violent extremism has changed since September 11th.

Terrorists do not have to travel overseas to receive training. As we saw in the deadliest terror attack on U.S. soil since 9/11, in Orlando this past June, the terrorists are acting alone, outside of large cells. Terrorists do not have to be directed by any one leader and do not have to be affiliated with any particular group. Terrorists are now being inspired by social media and other public platforms, including political discourse.

While top counterterrorism officials have stated that un-American policies such as profiling and exclusion play into the hands of terrorists, people with public platforms still continue to use this rhetoric. For example, there is a Presidential nominee who has chosen to call 11 million people rapists and murders and proposes Cold War ideological tests on Muslim visitors to this country.

We have Members of Congress who suggest that we should profile entire communities. In fact, just yesterday in this very room, we had a Member make a comparison of a gifted student's engineering project to the bombs that were built by the perpetrator in New York and New Jersey.

And while we put a continued focus on one community and debate titles and names, we still willingly neglect the current threat picture. Yesterday, we also heard from well-respected heads of police departments from across this nation. They told us that foreign terrorist organizations pose a threat to their communities, but their officers also live with the threat from sovereign citizens and other right and left wing groups.

Our witnesses agreed that the widespread proliferation of guns into the hands of terrorists inspired by foreign and domestic extremists haunts law enforcement every day. This was not the Committee's first time hearing that guns were adding complexities to the current threat picture. Secretary Johnson testified that in order for homeland security to improve there must be sensible gun laws.

Even though we have testimony from the Secretary of Homeland Security and police on the front lines about the need for gun reform, the Republican majority continues to block legislation to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists.

Knowing that the threat landscape has changed, the Department of Homeland Security renewed its focus countering violent extremism. In September 2015, DHS established the Office of Community Partnerships to further the Departments CVE efforts.

DHS also chairs the Administration's CVE task force, which places the agency at the forefront of the Administration's CVE efforts. While the Department has renewed its focus on countering violent extremism and is a part of this task force, DHS - which stated that there was a Department-wide CVE strategy in formation - still has not sent this strategy or implementation plan to Congress.

Hopefully, today, Mr. Selim can give this Subcommittee a date that the DHS CVE strategy and implementation plan will be submitted to Congress.

Furthermore, even though the Department has this new office that is supposed to counter violent extremism of all types, its testimony today contains short-sighted examples.

Foreign terrorist organizations are mentioned approximately 20 times throughout the Department's testimony. The Department does not articulate any activity in which it engages to counter violent extremism from domestic movements.

I can say that I am not shocked; however, as the agency whose mission is to secure the nation from the threats we face, I will say that having such a myopic approach to countering violent extremism is a disservice to the American public.

Today, I anticipate a robust discussion and hope that both our Members and witnesses will respectfully engage in a constructive dialogue that will inform our countering violent extremism policies and efforts going forward.

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