



Federal Bureau of Investigation

Title of Instruction:	Countering Violent Extremism in the United States
Time of Instruction:	Varied
Target Group:	Varied – content tailored to audience
Instructor:	CTC Staff
Methods of Instruction:	Lecture with Q & A throughout the course of discussion
Additional Information:	N/A
Date:	Habitual

Statement of Goals and Objectives

Instructional Goal:

The purpose of this presentation is to describe the components of a holistic strategy for engagement, an essential aspect of mitigating the risks associated with radicalization in the Muslim diaspora and Muslim-American community, as well as mitigating the risks associated with increasing levels of anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States. This same engagement strategy is applicable for any minority community – the presentation's focus on the Muslim community in the United States is not because of its actions, but because it is the target of both militant propaganda from terrorist organizations like al-Qa'ida, and because this community is subject to rising levels of Islamophobia and intolerance. Partnering with this community is the best way to provide security for the Muslim community in the United States and to mitigate the risks associated with both forms of predations against it.

Note: This strategy is the result of numerous conversations, conferences, and consultations with a host of individuals and organizations. It is not original scholarship on the part of the presenter, but an attempt to aggregate the collective wisdom of the community of public servants and private citizens concerned with issues of radicalization and anti-Muslim sentiment. That being said, this presentation does not necessarily reflect the views of any government entity, West Point and the Combating Terrorism Center included.

Instructional Objectives:

Following this block of instruction, the learner will be:

- More familiar with the demographics of the Muslim American community
- Able to recognize diversity within the community, including individuals who range from apolitical to politically active, non-Islamist to Islamist, pacifist to potentially radical
- Able to describe potential engagement approaches and strategies related to the mitigation of potential radicalization

List of Items and Materials

Equipment / Aids Required for Instructor:

- Overhead Proxima projector
- Computer
- Pointer
- PowerPoint

Equipment / Aids Required for Students:

- CTC West Point handbook with note-taking space provided
- Pencil/pen

Power Point Slides or Outline:

Outline:

1. Title Slide: Countering Violent Extremism in the American Context
2. 
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
11. Key Take-Aways

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Handouts:

- Provided by CTC West Point

Outline of Activities

Content	Instructor Notes
Grabber: <i>Please see attached presentation</i> Introduction: Instructors introduce themselves and their credentials. Thesis Statement: The Muslim community in the United States is one of – if not the – most diverse communities of Muslims in the world. Generalizations regarding Islam or what it means to be a Muslim in the United States are unhelpful at best and counter-productive at worst. It is essential to understand the diversity of this community and how positive engagement strategies can help mitigate potential radicalization. Needs Statement: Understanding the diversity of the Muslim American community and the components of a holistic strategy for engagement are key to the successful mitigation of risks associated with both radicalization and increasing levels of anti-Muslim sentiment. Objective #1: Describe the diversity of the Muslim American community in the United States, as well as key issues this community faces. The Muslim community in the United States is one of if not the most diverse community of Muslims in the world. Due to changes in immigration policy and practice following the attacks of September 2001, the Muslim community in the United States is increasingly American in citizenship due to naturalization and birthright. Muslim families and communities are dispersed across the entirety of the country's landmass. They are of varying degrees of religiosity and of divergent group membership. For all of these reasons and more, any generalization regarding Islam or what it means to be a Muslim in the United States is unhelpful at best and counter-productive at worst. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, this presentation argues that "Islam" is not even the most appropriate or helpful lens with which to view and understand the Muslim community in the United States because of the diversity described briefly here.	

This is not to discount the importance of religion to its adherents, but to say that governmental efforts to know and partner with our Muslim communities must go beyond partnerships with the mosque and a cursory understanding of Islam. Instead, our partnerships must be based on person-to-person relationships with members and organizations from across the spectrum of belief, behavior, and membership. As a corollary, the diversity of the community and well as the rights and responsibilities of citizenship make partnerships essential if we are to be able to thwart radicalization within or hate-crimes against these communities.

Objective #2: Discuss spectrum of activities to engage with the Muslim American community.

When conceptualizing this diverse community and designing a spectrum of activities to engage with it, it is important to marry USG level-of-effort with representation within the Muslim community. Just because one portion of the Muslim community may be the most vocal, it may not be the most representative. For example, if only 20% of the high school students of a given town attend mosque regularly, but 40% participate in high school sports, the local engagement strategy should account for this reality. It is also important for engagement efforts to involve a wide variety of the most pressing concerns of a given community. Countering violent extremism and counterterrorism are only subsets of the larger engagement effort.

Objective #3: Discuss the mechanics of an engagement strategy.

The mechanics of an engagement strategy intended in part to prevent radicalization should reflect the components of radicalization. This presentation arranges components of various radicalization models in a linear fashion for the purposes of deconstructing the phenomenon and mapping specific countermeasures to each component. It is important to note that radicalization is not necessarily a linear process, nor does it have to begin with a grievance and end with mobilization. Instead, the four components listed here (Grievance, Cognitive Opening, Ideology, Mobilization) are merely inter-related. *For example, it may be that an older*

brother mobilizes a younger brother by bringing him to planning meetings for an attack, during which the younger brother's adoration for his older brother creates a cognitive opening such that when subjected to an ideology he subscribes to the imbedded grievance narrative. Just as the four components of radicalization highlighted here can occur in parallel, measures to prevent radicalization must work in parallel.

Given these four components, a comprehensive engagement strategy should address grievances, fill cognitive openings among at-risk communities with positive ideas, counter the competing militant ideologies, and disrupt attempts at mobilization towards violence. To take these four actions, there are four conceptual thrusts of the strategy which must work in parallel.

1) Engagement efforts lead by the local government but supported by federal and community actors should address grievances held by a given community by providing requisite services, representative government, and by fostering integration. The local governmental engagement practitioners should not be the same individuals as the local counterterrorism practitioner, so as not to securitize the engagement relationship, and to emphasize that engagement is a holistic concern of the government and not just a manifestation of counterterrorism concerns.

2) Countering Violent Extremism – Community Building efforts lead by community leaders and non-governmental organizations but supported by local government should focus on providing programs for the community that provide positive ideas, skills, and relationships for at-risk communities as identified by concerned members of the community. Community resources should be aggregated in a resource rolodex which local law enforcement, local government, and community actors can utilize to direct those with concerns.

3) Countering Violent Extremism – Counter-Ideology efforts also lead by community leaders and non-governmental organizations, empowered by governmental resources such as awareness programs in which community leaders are educated to the nature of the global jihad's predatory propaganda, should focus their efforts on discrediting both the militant message and the ideologues conveying the

militant message.

4)Counterterrorism efforts should remain the purview of the federal government and law enforcement community.

However, partnerships between counterterrorism practitioners and Engagement and CVE practitioners should be strengthened at the local level such that a community member or local governmental employee will feel confident in the professionalism, competence, and objectivity of the counterterrorism community.

Summary/Conclusion:

Any engagement strategy must mitigate the component parts of radicalization while addressing larger community issues. It is essential to avoid securitizing the relationship between government and the community, as this can be counterproductive. The community itself is best placed to lead in CVE matters, while the government must lead in engagement and counterterrorism.

It is essential that engagement efforts be based upon a true desire to get to know the local communities in question. A strategy built upon a caricature of the American-Muslim community will undermine these efforts, underlining the need for objective and credible educational efforts for local government and law enforcement communities. As the American Muslim community is hugely diverse, it demands a contextualized approach based upon partnership with communities at the local level. From within these communities, engagement partners must come from a cross-section of Muslim-American life. The loudest organization is not necessarily the most representative, so efforts must be made to engage with the community across the spectrum of belief, membership, and activity. Communication and Civil Rights are the currency of trust in this endeavor, and will ultimately serve both the community and the government well.

Bibliography

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