

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD SUBMITTED BY

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**Threat of Islamic Terrorism**

**Question 1:** Your written testimony was frustratingly vague about the terrorist threat the United States faces. You briefly mentioned the continuing threat from al-Qaeda and its affiliates, but for most of your discussion of the terrorist threat, you referred only to undifferentiated “terrorism” or “violent extremism.”

In its Final Report, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (the “9-11 Commission”), stated, “[T]he enemy is not just ‘terrorism,’ some generic evil. This vagueness blurs [counter-terrorism] strategy. The catastrophic threat at this moment in history is more specific. It is the threat posed by Islamist terrorism—especially the al-Qaeda networks, its affiliates, and its ideology.” (emphasis in the original.)

*Do you agree with the 9-11 Commission that, “The catastrophic threat at this moment in history ...is the threat posed by Islamist terrorism?”*

**ANSWER:** Yes. The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) assesses that the most significant terrorist threat to the homeland is that posed by al-Qa’ida, its affiliates and allies, and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs) inspired by al-Qa’ida’s ideology. This long term threat stems from the violent, anti-Western nature of al-Qa’ida’s ideology, and individuals who adhere to this belief system as justification for violent action.

*Do you agree with the 9-11 Commission that the “ideology” of al-Qaeda is a threat and must be countered?*

Yes. Al-Qa’ida’s narrative of hatred and violent opposition to democracy, the West, and non-Muslims in general represents a threat to the United States and its allies but it also represents a threat to achieving peace and stability in the Middle East and South Asia. Al-Qa’ida opposes democratic institutions that are essential

to the development of good governance and its advocacy of violence to further its goals undermines the stability of countries it targets.

***How would you define the “ideology” of al-Qaeda?***

Al-Qa’ida’s ideology is best described using its own words, as detailed in Usama bin Ladin’s 1998 fatwa: “...to kill Americans and their allies—civilian and military—is an individual duty of every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.” These directives extend also to efforts to exploit the resources of the United States, as bin Ladin further asked followers to “...comply with God’s order to kill the Americans and plunder their money wherever and whenever they find it.” DHS is most concerned about individuals who use this ideology and premise to conduct acts of violence.

**Threat of Homegrown Violent Extremism**

**Question 2:** In your written testimony, you note “a conscious effort by terrorists to recruit people who are already in the United States” and refer to this as the “threat of homegrown violent extremism.”

***What is your definition of “homegrown violent extremism”?***

**ANSWER:** DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) define a HIVE as a person of any citizenship who has lived and/or operated primarily in the United States or its territories who advocates, is engaged in, or is preparing to engage in ideologically-motivated terrorist activities (including providing support to terrorism) in furtherance of political or social objectives promoted by a foreign terrorist organization, but is acting independently of direction by a foreign terrorist organization. HVEs are distinct from traditional domestic terrorists who engage in unlawful acts of violence to intimidate civilian populations or attempt to influence domestic policy without direction from or influence from a foreign actor.

***Please give examples of major attempted or successful terrorist attacks conducted by homegrown violent extremists.***

The threat from HVEs appears to be growing. The Congressional Research Service reported in September 2010 that 19 arrests of HVEs were made between May 2009 and August 2010, compared to 21 such plots in the entire period between September 11, 2001 and May 2009. The Heritage Foundation reported in a May 2011 report that 39 plots involving HVEs had been disrupted since the September 11, 2001 attacks. Most plots are disrupted before they can occur through effective work by the FBI and its Joint Terrorism Task Forces. Examples of some recent disrupted plots include:

- The arrest of Naser Abdo<sup>USPER</sup> in June 2011 for allegedly plotting to attack Ft. Hood, Texas.
- The arrest by the New York Police Department in May 2011 of Mohamed Mamdouh<sup>USPER</sup> and Ahmed Ferhani after they attempted to purchase a hand grenade, guns, and ammunition to attack an unidentified synagogue.
- Mohamed Osman Mohamud's<sup>USPER</sup> November 2010 alleged failed attempt to bomb a Christmas celebration in Portland, Oregon.
- The arrest of Farooque Ahmed<sup>USPER</sup> in October 2010 for allegedly plotting to attack the Washington, DC subway system.

In addition to disrupted plots, 2009 saw two fatal attacks with the Ft. Hood shootings allegedly carried out by Nidal Hasan<sup>USPER</sup> and the shooting of two military recruiters in Little Rock, Arkansas by Carlos Bledsoe<sup>USPER</sup>.

***Which terrorist groups are trying to recruit people in the United States?***

Al-Qa'ida, its affiliates, and groups ideologically aligned with them have attempted to inspire persons based in the United States to support their operations. Any terrorist group that can benefit from fundraising, acquisition of material, or recruiting activities in the United States is likely to attempt to recruit people in the United States.

Foreign terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qa'ida and individual terrorist thought leaders who ascribe to al-Qa'ida's ideology actively seek to inspire Westerners to carry out attacks against Western and United States targets. These parties seek to inspire individuals living in communities within the United States via print, video, and social media, as well as through personal interaction.

This is not a phenomenon restricted solely to one community. The threat posed by violent extremists is real and not limited to a single ideology. Individuals inspired by the sovereign citizen extremist movement, white supremacist extremist movement, militia extremist movement, anti-abortion extremist movement, animal rights extremist movement, and the anarchist extremist movement have attempted to or carried out acts of violence in the US over the past few years. The threat environment constantly evolves, which is why DHS must consider all types of violent extremism.

***With what methods and arguments are they trying to recruit people?***

Al-Qa'ida and its affiliates increasingly have relied on Western ideologues—particularly American citizens like the now-deceased Anwar al-Aulaqi and Samir Khan, as well as Omar Hammami<sup>USPER</sup>, and Adam Gadahn<sup>USPER</sup> to convey their

message via increasingly sophisticated English-language propaganda. The increasing availability on the Internet of materials advocating attacks against the United States and providing practical operational advice, combined with social networking tools that facilitate violent extremist communication, has contributed to a more diversified and challenging threat picture in the United States. Due in part to these factors, propaganda releases by even deceased ideologues such as al-Aulaqi have the potential to remain transcendent and inspire violent action by individuals within the United States.

- Al-Aulaqi, Khan, and Hammami have appealed to potential violent extremists through their use of colloquial English, slick presentations and the use of social networking sites such as YouTube<sup>USPER</sup> and Facebook<sup>USPER</sup>.
- These violent extremist ideologues—al-Aulaqi and Khan in particular—spearheaded recent efforts to provide Americans and other Westerners with the ability to independently plan and execute their own terrorist attacks without the need to travel overseas for training—through English-language propaganda.

***Whom are they trying to recruit—American citizens, legal permanent residents, refugees, illegal aliens, all of the above?***

Al-Qa`ida, its affiliates, and likeminded groups attempt to inspire anyone who has access to the United States and can further their operations. Al-Qa`ida and al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula have focused recent propaganda on Western, English-speaking Muslims, and their messages have resonated and inspired some people to carry out or plot acts of violence, including US-born and naturalized citizens and Legal Permanent Residents. A few examples include:

- Others have been inspired by al-Qa`ida's message to carry out attacks on their own. Alleged November 2009 Ft. Hood shooter Nidal Hasan, Carlos Bledsoe who shot two serviceman at a recruiting center in Arkansas in 2009, and Michael Finton,<sup>USPIER</sup> who plotted to blow up a court house in Springfield, Illinois are examples of lone offenders inspired by violent extremist propaganda.

### Community Efforts to Counter Violent Extremism

**Question 3:** In your written testimony, you state that “law enforcement officials work with members of diverse communities that broadly and strongly reject violent extremism.”

*Please specify which communities you were referring to.*

**ANSWER:** The Administration’s and DHS’ approach to countering violent extremism (CVE) emphasizes the strength of local communities. Local communities are best placed to recognize the threat and push back against violent extremists who may be targeting their families and neighbors. Our Nation’s homeland security is based on the premise that we must harness local efforts to counter national threats. DHS is contributing to multiple interagency efforts, and with non-federal and non-governmental partners, to engage local communities in our CVE efforts to make them safe, secure, and resilient. Our understanding of why an individual becomes a violent extremist continues to mature, and we continue to work with communities to better understand the dynamics that may contribute to that outcome.

- Through our Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL), DHS continues to educate tribal, state and local law enforcement on cultural awareness and how best to engage with communities.
- CRCL doubled its outreach to communities this year and expanded quarterly engagement roundtables to 14 cities throughout the country. During FY2011, CRCL also conducted 72 community engagement events with communities including those based on CVE- related topics
- To date, CRCL has also trained more than 2,490 police officers on ways to counter violent extremism in their own communities.
- DHS and the Department of Justice have also trained over 180,000 frontline officers through the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative and hope to reach all of America’s officers on the frontlines by fall of 2011.
- In addition to these training initiatives, DOJ and DHS, under the Building Communities of Trust Guidance, have coordinated engage our state and local law enforcement and community partners to share best practices on forming working partnerships and community based solutions in meetings across the country.
- DHS is working with state, local, tribal and federal partners to develop a CVE Curriculum for state, local, tribal, and federal law enforcement as well for use at academics.

We are expanding outreach to communities that may be targeted for recruitment by violent extremists; engaging those communities on issues of common interest; promoting greater awareness and understanding of Federal resources, programs, and security measures; and addressing community concerns.

DHS continues to work closely with state and local partners, and individual citizens, to raise awareness through initiatives such as the “If You See Something, Say Something™” public awareness campaign and the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative. The See Something/Say Something campaign provides all citizens a positive role in securing our country. The SAR initiative, meanwhile, leverages the power of state and local first responders to identify potential terrorist activity, providing law enforcement the opportunity to disrupt and dismantle terrorist plots. The SAR Initiative provides a standardized system for reporting suspicious activity based on behavior analyzed across national trends and shared across jurisdictions and sectors. In many cases, information shared through the SAR Initiative provides a medium for sharing valuable information across the Intelligence Community that previously went unharvested and unevaluated.

***Please rank in order of threat, from highest to lowest, the types of violent extremism (e.g., violent Islamic extremism, environmental/animal rights activists, militias, white supremacist movements, etc.) that the United States faces.***

- We face a threat environment where violent extremism is neither constrained by international borders, nor limited to any single ideology.
- We know that foreign terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qa’ida, and individual terrorist leaders, are actively seeking to recruit Westerners to carry out attacks against U.S. targets.
- We also know that individuals based in the Homeland promote violence inspired by ideological beliefs.
- This is not a phenomenon restricted solely to one community and any effort to counter violent extremism (CVE) must be applicable to all ideologically motivated violence.

At present, we judge that threats from al-Qa’ida and its affiliates pose the greatest threat to the homeland. These groups have demonstrated great persistence, resilience, and capability in plotting to carry out attacks against the United States despite a series of setbacks. Their recent encouragement of individual action by their supporters complicates the threat picture, as individuals acting in support of their ideology may not be in contact with overseas plotters and thus may escape notice of the Intelligence Community. Individuals exploiting information on

explosives and terrorist tactics on the Internet potentially can carry out attacks with compressed time for training and planning.

The threat of violence from domestic violent extremists also emanates from small, clandestine cells or individuals acting independently. In just the past three years, there have been several incidents involving domestic extremists committing or attempting violent acts. For example, lone offenders from the white supremacist extremist movement attacked a guard at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington, DC in 2009 and attempted to bomb a Martin Luther King, Jr. Day parade in Washington State in 2011, while a lone anti-abortion extremist in Kansas murdered an abortion doctor in 2009. In 2010, two unaffiliated sovereign citizen extremists murdered two law enforcement officers in Arkansas during a traffic stop, while several other unaffiliated sovereign citizen extremists have attempted to kill law enforcement officers. Lastly, animal rights extremist activity in the Homeland seems to be on the increase. A self-proclaimed animal rights extremist in Utah was arrested and pled guilty to burning down a leather factory, and restaurant, and a Colorado sheepskin factory in 2011. Consequently, our analysis focuses on the possible tactics and targets of these cells or individuals, as well as violent extremist groups.

### I&A Resources

**Question 4:** *Please describe how the resources of DHS, in particular the Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the rest of the DHS Intelligence Enterprise are allocated in accordance with your ranking of priorities.*

**ANSWER:** I&A and the rest of the DHS Intelligence Enterprise do not allocate intelligence resources exclusively to one particular terrorist group or movement.

We remain mindful that al-Qa'ida, its affiliated and allied groups, and those motivated by its ideology, remain the primary focus of DHS analytic efforts. Additionally, analysts within DHS focus on a variety of related topics and issues, to include homegrown violent extremism; terrorist tactics, techniques, and procedures; terrorist travel and immigration security; chemical and biological weapons use or development by terrorist groups; as well as violent domestic terrorist groups. We partner with the DHS Intelligence Enterprise in every way possible to gain valuable insight and added-value on these subjects, using CBP data and reporting to inform our analysis on terrorist travel, as well as information from the state and local fusion centers on homegrown violent extremism and domestic terrorism. Finally, our Intelligence Community partners remain a vital source of partnership, as information provided by FBI and NCTC in particular assists our understanding of developing threats that may require sharing with our state and local partners.