



Scenario – Columbus, OH

Note: This is a hypothetical scenario derived from a series of actual cases involving known homegrown violent extremists' actions prior to arrest.¹ By combining facts from a variety of cases the scenario permits more dynamic interactions between workshop participants while still ensuring that scenario is representative of real world events.

Setting: Columbus, OH

¹ This scenario is based upon several leading cases involving home grown extremists including, but not limited to: (b) (6)

STAGE ONE

Scene 1: Community Perspective

Hassan just turned 18 and is a senior at local high school in Upper Arlington. He lives at home with his parents and his older brother, Abdi. Hassan is a good student and has always been a pretty well-behaved kid with lots of friends. Hassan looks up to and trusts Mr. Edwards, one of his teachers who he has several classes with. Mr. Edwards sees a great deal of potential in Hassan and has spent additional time tutoring him so he can get into THE Ohio State University (OSU) to study engineering, just like his brother—the first generation to go to college. Mr. Edwards was a good teacher and mentor for Abdi when he was in high school, which led to him getting a scholarship for engineering at OSU. Mr. Edwards has seen much less of Hassan lately, and last week, Hassan told him he was thinking of focusing less on engineering. When Mr. Edwards tried to further discuss, Hassan would not give a clear reason.

Hassan did mention to Mr. Edwards that his grades have been slipping in all of his classes. Mr. Edwards has noticed that Hassan has pulled away from his friends at school. Hassan recently complained to Mr. Edwards that Muslims are treated unfairly in America—for instance, his younger cousin has been harassed in school and called a “terrorist” and other hurtful names, and his Somali friends in town have felt unfairly profiled by the police. Hassan said he does not think anyone cares enough about this maltreatment and these injustices are inspiring him to make some changes in his life. When Mr. Edwards encouraged Hassan to become active in school and in his community on these issues, Hassan said that his brother, Abdi, is part of the OSU Somali Student Association, but he is rethinking the value of college for himself and that he might take a “greater path,” but would not tell the teacher what that meant.

Abdi and Hassan’s mother is out of town visiting relatives, and Abdi is concerned because Hassan did not come home after school last night and is not answering his phone. Hassan had told Abdi that he would stay after school with Mr. Edwards and study with friends afterward. However, Abdi connected with those friends last night to check on his brother, and no one had seen or heard from Hassan. Abdi says that Hassan has increasingly been staying out late, but has never failed to come home before and never ignores his phone calls. Abdi does not want to tell his mother or call the local police because he does not want to get Hassan in trouble. Abdi sends an email to Mr. Edwards to see if he knows where he might be.

Scene 2: Law Enforcement Perspective

Around 11:30 pm at the Greater Columbus Convention Center, a Columbus Police Department officer notices and reports a “young black male walking around the exterior of the and peeking through the glass windows.” The individual appeared to be furiously typing something into his phone and taking pictures of the center. When the officer stops to question the individual, he answers that he had been waiting for a friend to drive him home. He refuses to give the friend’s name, address, or any further information, and accuses the officer of deliberately targeting him because he is Somali. The officer perceives the individual is acting belligerent and hostile in response to his questioning and senses that something just “does not seem right.” The officer asks Hassan to see the pictures that Hassan had been taking on his phone. Hassan reluctantly hands his phone to the officer, which is open to

Hassan's Facebook page. The officer sees a link to a video about Syria and Assad posted on Hassan's Facebook wall by a friend named "Ahmed Mohammed". The officer asks Hassan to navigate to the pictures, where he sees images of the entrances and exits of the Columbus Convention Center. While the officer is closing out the pictures to hand the phone back to Hassan, he notices that Hassan's screensaver is a graphic with Arabic writing on it. When he asks Hassan about the significance of the screensaver, Hassan says that he doesn't remember where he got it from and that he doesn't know what it represents, since he doesn't know any Arabic, but he has it because he liked the image.

The officer asks Hassan for his ID and tells Hassan to wait outside the vehicle while he runs Hassan's name to see if Hassan has a criminal record. All that comes back is a summons from the previous year for trespassing with an individual named Ahmed Mohammed, DOB 7/24/89. Wondering whether this was the same "Ahmed Mohammed" who posted the Syrian video, the officer runs his name as well. Meanwhile, Hassan stands outside waiting patiently and feeling uncomfortable. That name does not come up, but a "Ahmed Muhamad" appears as a hit on a US Government watch list.

Eventually the officer tells Hassan that he can leave. Hassan does not have enough money to take a taxi, and does not want to ask the police for a ride, so he waits for the bus, and doesn't arrive home until early the next morning. When he finally arrives home, his brother is upset that he didn't know where Hassan was the entire night.

Scene One: Community Perspective	Scene Two: Law Enforcement Perspective
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surface current perspectives and assessments of young people’s behavior (these perceptions will differ, so help to understand <i>others’</i> perceptions) • Use the experience and knowledge of other participants to gain a richer, preferably broadly shared, understanding • Identify different courses of action available to friends, parents, and other responsible persons • Surface differing reactions to the likely outcomes and risks attached to those actions • Select a course of action or ‘decision’ for Mr. Edwards 	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn points about current law and police procedure • Uncover differing expectations about ‘reasonable’ reactions and actions by law enforcement • Surface current anxieties about law enforcement actions • Probe alternative reactions and their risks or likely outcomes • Identify whether there is any further action or ‘decision’ for the police officer to take
<p>Guiding the Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion questions (below) 2. Testing, probing those responses 3. Identifying a decision or action for Mr. Edwards 	<p>Guiding the Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion questions (below) 2. Testing, probing those responses 3. Identifying a decision or action for the law enforcement officer if appropriate
<p>Discussion Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is “normal”? In other words, what would ring alarm bells about your child, friend, young person you have a responsibility for? Different kinds of concerns: schoolwork, health, relationships, drugs, changes in behavior, other vulnerabilities, vulnerability to radicalization or recruitment. • Reasons why Hassan might have pulled away from friends and school, why his grades are failing—what are signs of risk and vulnerability? • Community and family reactions to children becoming more independent and averse to parental control • Reasons why friends or family might be anxious about contacting the police and involving them in the case 	<p>Discussion Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses and abuses of the curfew laws; what is “usual” behavior of law-abiding citizens; what responses, reactions, or behavior would cross the line and lead to arrest; etc.? • Are there community perceptions Somali or Muslim Americans are treated differently by the police? • Various reasons the young man might not want to show ID or doesn’t want to name his friend? Is that suspicious? • Procedures about what the police can do about searching, confiscating, returning property • Reactions to Muslim names by authorities; different possibilities of “different person, common name” or “same person, different transliteration” • Reactions to people who appear “different”; reactions to Islamic dress; different community perspectives on proper dress for different genders • Process and procedural issues about the name check. • Reporting the incident to the FBI: what is the threshold for interpreting this as potential (or actual) terrorist case? Potential for conflict, differing opinions between police/FBI

STAGE TWO

Scene 3: Community Perspective

Abdi visits Mr. Edwards after school that afternoon. He has been shaken by what happened to Hassan. He says he wants to tell Mr. Edwards something but he has to promise not to tell anyone. After Mr. Edwards gives his assurance, Abdi tells Mr. Edwards that Hassan has been looking at “weird websites” with “violent images and videos,” as well as websites supporting both ISIS and Al Shabaab. He also tells him that Hassan recently applied for a passport and speaks about traveling to Syria to fight the brutality there, though Abdi always just assumed it was all talk.

Later in the day Hassan also comes to see Mr. Edwards. He says he is in trouble with his brother, but even more, he is seriously upset by what has happened to him. He insists he hasn't done anything wrong; he was just with a friend. He won't answer questions about the friend (including if it was a boy or girl), saying he is 18 now and an adult, and he has a right to lead his own life and not be treated like a child and answer all these questions.

He says the police inspected his phone, but gave it back. He tells Mr. Edwards he is worried the police might have tampered with his phone and bugged it. He also tells the teacher he's worried about the internet history on the phone and is worried that they read the Arabic writing on his screensaver.

When Hassan is gone, Mr. Edwards realizes that Hassan has left his phone behind, with the screensaver visible. He shows the screensaver to a colleague who reads and speaks Arabic and translates it: “Our fellow Muslims must follow a righteous path. We are all going to be held accountable for what we do in this life. We need to be strong. Islam is not passive. It's not just about words or beliefs. It's about action. *‘Those who believe fight in the way of God; and those who do not, only fight for the powers of evil; so you should fight the allies of Satan. Allah loves those who fight for his cause.’*”

Hassan calls Mr. Edwards from his brother's phone to say he left behind his own phone by mistake and wants to come and get it. When Mr. Edwards picks up Hassan's phone he sees a Facebook message from someone named Ahmed: “Same airport hassle. Coming home 4 big event tomorrow and lighting of cake, landing @ 3:20 2day, can u pick me up?” When Hassan arrives, Mr. Edwards asks about Ahmed, whom he's never heard of, and this big event. Hassan replies that Ahmed is a new friend and the big event is his cousin's birthday. When Mr. Edwards asks about the screensaver Hassan again insists he doesn't understand the meaning of the Arabic writing.

Mr. Edwards decides to call Abdi and tells him about Ahmed. Abdi then becomes nervous and further checks Hassan's internet history on the computer and clicks on them, discovering more extremist websites. He isn't sure who to call who he can trust about this. He calls the imam at his masjid, but the imam has not handled a situation like this before, and doesn't know who the best person is to call about this either. He is nervous to call the police or FBI.

Abdi checks Hassan's mobile phone and sees a response to Ahmed: “u can count on me, i'll b there. i'm serious...i'm not scared...i thought it out...i'm ready.” He then confronts Hassan regarding the events of the past few days and asks if he has become involved in something he shouldn't be. Hassan admits that some new friends have persuaded him to become involved in a protest demonstration at the convention center, to protest drone bombings and to defend Syria. Abdi presses for details, but

Hassan says he doesn't know any more. Abdi warns him about the dangers of getting involved with the wrong people, and probes him about the violent imagery on websites discovered on the computer, questioning if Hassan had become involved with one of those organizations. Hassan says he is against violence and would not join such an organization, but he is upset about issues like Syria, and believes Muslims have to protest and stand up for justice.

Scene 4: Law Enforcement Perspective

Information comes through to the Columbus Police Department from the FBI. Credible intelligence has been received about a serious threat to the Columbus Convention Center from both overseas and homegrown violent extremists. The reporting raises concerns about a potential explosive device in a car.

There is also information about an incoming person of concern, 'Ahmed Mohammed, who is on a Columbus-bound flight manifest. There is also a 'Ahmed Muhamad' on a no-fly list. The passenger Ahmed Mohamed was thoroughly investigated two weeks ago when he checked in to fly overseas, but it was concluded that he was not the same person as the individual on the no-fly list and he was allowed to board. The same happened when he checked in on the return flight; again, it was concluded he was not the same individual and was allowed to board. Now, however, because of the intelligence received, concerns have been raised again. He is due to land at 3:20 this afternoon.

The FBI again contacts the CPD, this time about a telephone intercept, which mentions a 'Ahmed Mohammed arriving soon for 'the big day in Columbus. The same voice also stated, 'we have the car, and Ahmed has the boy.' The FBI then ask the police about the recent interview that led to an inquiry about Ahmed Mohammed.

Scene Three: Community Perspective	Scene Four: Law Enforcement Perspective
<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share perceptions of causes of grievance and their impact on individuals • Understand and assess different areas of risk and vulnerability (internet, inflammatory material, etc.) • Understand (for non-Muslims particularly) how the Qur'an and other revered texts can be misused or abused, not only by Muslim propagandists, but also by anti-Muslim propagandists; doubled negative impact on Muslim citizens • Surface different perceptions of appropriate responses in situations that cause concern, but with an absence of proof and with plausible innocent explanations • Learn from the experience and knowledge of other participants about the signs of risk • Gain greater clarity on assessing risk and vulnerability for concerned family and community • Learn how law enforcement would likely respond to reported concerns • Learn any formal or legal boundaries and responsibilities in reporting concerns • Share different perceptions of the impact of reporting, on the individual and on their family • Identify a course of action for Mr. Edwards and his brother 	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn more about the legal limits and constraints on law enforcement • Clarify the impact of civil liberties and other community concerns not only on assessing intelligence, but on day-to-day situations like no-fly lists, airport stops and questioning, etc.
<p>Guiding the Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discussion questions (below) 2. Testing, probing those responses 3. Identifying a decision or action for Mr. Edwards and his brother 	<p>Guiding the Discussion</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. (optional) Expert briefing 2. Discussion questions (below) 3. Testing, probing those responses 4. Identifying a decision or action for the law enforcement individuals
<p>Discussion Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could Mr. Edwards answer Abdi's request for confidentiality? Should he give it or refuse it and risk not learning something important? Should he give it but outline the circumstances where he might have to report what Abdi says? • What responsibilities does Mr. Edwards have to Abdi and Hassan about respecting their requests for confidentiality and privacy? In what circumstances can or should you break it? • What responsibilities does Mr. Edwards have to their parents? • Risks in being asked to receive property from friends • Is it legal to bug someone's cell phone; civil liberties and protections for citizens; procedures to be gone through, etc? 	<p>Discussion Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the likely community impact of such actions (e.g., if the person is innocent)? • How should you balance negative impacts and risks of different courses of action, including civil liberties concerns, rights, and wider community impact? • What constitutes sufficient information to take different decisions – what do you do if you don't have the information and can't acquire it in time? (e.g., before 2:30 flight arrives...) • How does communication of intelligence work between the FBI and local law enforcement? Are there limits to what can be shared, any legal requirements, what's the impact if an individual makes the wrong judgment call?

- How much should you question someone you know if your concerns are aroused – are there risks?
 - Is expressing anger at America (Tariq’s text and the screensaver) normal, understandable, a sign of extremism? How do you distinguish these? How do you view anger at the US government?
 - Ways to interpret “the big event”
 - How would Mr. Edwards be received if he went to the police at this stage? What would happen to him – to Hassan – impact on the family? On the wider community? Confidentiality about his concerns? Might things leak out and do terrible damage?
 - What should the imam do? Why might the imam be scared to call law enforcement?
 - Concerns about the internet – normal parental concerns, but also about potential for extremist material, online radicalization, possible responses by families
 - What does it mean to look at these websites—is it illegal? When does the FBI become involved?
 - What should friends or parents do about their kids viewing these websites?
 - Difficulties in interpreting the meaning of looking at extremist websites—legal, but concerning
- Difficulties in the judgment call of balancing public safety, civil liberties, further gathering of intelligence (e.g. if Tariq Khan allowed in subject to surveillance)
 - No-fly lists and other travel issues; impact on individuals and communities

Optional Expert Briefing

- Outline the possible courses of action for key individuals in this scene, e.g.:
 - the local police officer who made the arrest and is the one holding the knowledge of Hassan
 - FBI/others in a position to make the call on how to handle Tariq Khan when he arrives at the point of entry. Explain the legal constraints around each option, e.g.
 - Allow through, no further action
 - Allow through, subject to surveillance
 - Stop and question (legal constraints, etc.)
 - Arrest
- Outline key risks, constraints, likely consequences or outcomes

If Time Permits

Objectives

- Share experience and interpretation of how media outlets can impact situations.
- Share understanding of the dynamics of public perception and opinion, and how these are influenced
- Appreciate the impact on Muslim communities and individuals of negative portrayal in the media and public opinion
- Assess ambiguous situations and intentions: non-violent protest vs. violent action
- Discuss legal and ethical responsibilities in reporting concerns
- (Optional) Understand the scope of the law and investigatory powers in situations such as Hassan's: legal and investigatory requirements, constraints in relation to rights and civil liberties, etc.

Guiding the Discussion

1. (optional) Expert briefing as before
2. Discussion questions (below)
3. Identifying a decision or action for Hassan's brother
4. Construct the ending

Discussion Questions

Since the options for dealing with Tariq Khan have been raised at the previous stage, in this discussion the decision taken on the law enforcement side (if any) can simply be revisited: does this new bit of intelligence change your assessment of risk and/or alter your decision?

Thereafter the situation really focuses on Hassan. Any requirements – or scope for individual judgment – on the part of the CPD vis-à-vis the FBI can be clarified. Then lead a discussion of what police/FBI action in relation to Hassan is warranted.

- In your experience, what impact does reporting of violent extremism and terrorist incidents have on Muslim communities and individuals?
- Is there a relationship between violent extremism and hate crimes?
- What should happen to/with Tariq?
- What should happen to/with Hassan?
- If Tariq turns out to be guilty, what would be the impact on Hassan?
 - “Guilt by association”? How should issues of association be handled?
 - What role can and should the community play in intervening, supporting, educating?
- If Tariq (or others) are arrested, how will communities react to the arrest? The aftermath?
- How will law enforcement communicate with the community leading up to the arrest and after?

Write the Ending

(A possible technique to ‘close’ the scenario)

Ask each group to concoct an ending to the story (or time permitting, have them draft two: one ‘bad’ and one ‘good’). If only one ending, the group can choose whether they want a horror story or a happy ending.

This should **not** be a long and detailed exercise but a quick sketch of probable outcomes of different courses of action. The objective is not to analyze information thus far and decide if Hassan (or Tariq) is innocent or guilty but simply to allow participants to trace through the likely outcome of decisions and actions they have tracked through the exercise.

FINAL EXERCISE

Convenor introduces the final exercise, in which participants develop their personal ideas for 1) a change they can make 2) changes they would like someone else to make.

Convener then asks the participants to help create an action plan for the Columbus City area: how will communities and law enforcement work together to build trust and to protect their communities from violent extremism? What are the problems we face? What is our end state? Goals/objectives? What programs can we do?