



Testimony for the Record

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for

The U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security

on

“The American Muslim Response to Hearings on Radicalization within their
Community”

Wednesday, June 20, 2012 – 10:00 a.m.
311 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman King, Ranking Member Thompson, and Distinguished Members of the Committee:

My name is John Cohen, I currently serve as the Principal Deputy Counterterrorism Coordinator and Senior Advisor to the Secretary at the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Secretary has designated me as the DHS lead for countering violent extremism (CVE) and my responsibilities include coordinating all of the Department's efforts associated with CVE.

I am pleased to submit this testimony for the record, and I thank the Committee for your strong support of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and our efforts to counter violent extremism. We look forward to continuing to work with the Committee on this effort.

The Department has responsibility for implementing a range of CVE initiatives outlined in the Administration's national CVE *Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States*. This role includes leveraging the Department's analytic, research, and information capabilities, engaging state and local authorities and communities to bolster pre-existing local partnerships, and supporting State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial Law Enforcement and communities through training, community policing practices, and grants. DHS works closely to coordinate and collaborate on these efforts with the National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC), the Department of Justice (DOJ), the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and other interagency and community partners.

Within the context of U.S.-based violent extremism, we know that foreign terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qa'ida, and individual extremists, are actively seeking to recruit or inspire Westerners to carry out attacks against western and U.S. targets. They are seeking to recruit and inspire individuals living in communities within the United States via social media, through personal interaction, and through the publication of magazines.

Today, the Department operates with the understanding that as it relates to domestic violent extremism we face the greatest terrorist risk from those extremists who have either been recruited by Al-Qa'ida or its affiliates or inspired by their ideology. This threat is real, as evidenced by the multiple recent thwarted attacks of domestic violent extremists inspired by Al-Qa'ida's ideology, to include the arrest of Naser Jason Abdo at Fort Hood in July, 2011 and the arrest of Amine el-Khalifi in February 2012 in Washington, D.C.

However, we also know that violent extremism can be inspired by various religious, political, or other ideological beliefs. Many communities and rural counties nationwide face such threats. For example, violent Sovereign Citizen Extremists have engaged in violence against State and Local law enforcement. Recognizing this, DHS has designed a CVE approach that applies to all forms of violent extremism, regardless of ideology. We

have conducted significant analysis and on research on multiple types of threats, in order to equip law enforcement with the capacity to detect and mitigate all forms of violent extremism.

In order to address these various threats, the Department is working with its Federal, State, Local, Tribal, and Territorial partners to fully integrate CVE awareness into the daily activities of law enforcement and local communities nationwide by building upon pre-existing partnerships and their existing practices, such as community policing, that have proven to be successful for decades. Specifically, DHS has made substantial progress in CVE in three key areas:

1. Better understanding the phenomenon of violent extremism through extensive analysis and research on the behaviors and indicators of violent extremism;
2. Enhancing operational partnerships with local communities, State and Local law enforcement, and international partners; and
3. Supporting community policing efforts through curriculum development, training and grant prioritization.

A major part of our effort to counter violent extremism also involves working directly with community members and advocacy groups. It is important to note that the vast majority of Muslim-Americans living in the United States do not subscribe to violent extremist ideologies and are actively working with local authorities, the FBI, DOJ, and DHS to protect their local communities from violence. These partnerships with community members are vital to our security, as evidenced by the fact that of the 86 foiled terrorist plots against the U.S. between 1999-2009, almost half of the plots were thwarted with help and participation from communities.¹

Better Understanding the Phenomenon of Violent Extremism

DHS has conducted extensive analysis and research to better understand the threat of violent extremism. This analysis and research is being shared with Federal, State, and Local authorities, fusion centers, local communities, and international law enforcement partners like Europol to empower, support, and equip them with the knowledge to better detect and identify potential behaviors associated with violent extremism to prevent violent crime in their communities. All of this information is also being integrated into all of the Department's CVE training for Federal, State, Local, and correctional facility law enforcement.

The Department has developed a number of case studies on known or suspected violent extremists that identify behaviors associated with violent extremism. The DHS Office for Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) has produced over 20 reports since 2009 on violent extremism. For example, in 2011 I&A developed an in-depth study that looks at the common behaviors associated with 62 cases of Al-Qa'ida-inspired violent extremists.

¹ "Building on Clues: Examining Successes and Failures in Detecting U.S. Terrorist Plots, 1999-2009," *Institute for Homeland Security Solutions*, October 2010.

DHS has also produced numerous unclassified homeland security reference aids analyzing domestic violent extremist groups, including violent Anarchist Extremists,² violent Racist Skinhead Extremists,³ and violent Sovereign Citizen Extremists.⁴

DHS I&A is also working with analysts at Europol to finalize a joint case study on the 2011 Norway terrorist attacks. It examines the behaviors that led to the attacks and analyzes Anders Breivik's manifesto. This case study will be shared with U.S. and European Union (EU) partners in order to provide an understanding of the behaviors that led to these attacks and provide information that may help prevent future incidents.

In addition, the DHS Science & Technology Directorate (S&T) is currently working closely with academic partners and DHS research centers of excellence, such as the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) at the University of Maryland, to finalize a study that focuses on how social experiences may have impacted the involvement of some Minneapolis-St. Paul Somali-American youth in violent extremism, how risk and protective factors impact young males' vulnerability to violent extremism recruitment, and how community members can intervene to prevent violent crime. In the next several months, S&T will also be conducting a series of focus groups with State and Local law enforcement and fusion center personnel at 20 different locations to better identify their CVE information and training needs.

Enhancing Operational Partnerships and Best Practices with Local Communities, State and Local law Enforcement, and International Partners

It is our belief that communities are part of the solution to countering violent extremism, and as such, DHS has worked and is continuing to work with local communities, including the Muslim-American community. The Secretary's Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) Countering Violent Extremism Working Group included national and local community leaders from the Muslim-American community. The HSAC CVE Working Group recommendations to enhance information-driven, community-oriented policing efforts were directly incorporated into the current DHS approach to CVE. In addition, the Department most recently worked with a broad spectrum of faith-based, including Muslim-American, organizations under the HSAC Faith-based Security and Communications Advisory Committee to learn how DHS can

² DHS defines Anarchists Extremists as "Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of violence as a means of changing the government and society in support of the belief that all forms of capitalism and corporate globalization should be opposed and that governing institutions are unnecessary and harmful to society."

³ DHS defines Racist Skinhead Extremists as "Groups or individuals who facilitate, support, or engage in acts of violence directed towards the federal government, ethnic minorities, or Jewish persons in support of their belief that Caucasians are intellectually and morally superior to other races and their perception that the government is controlled by Jewish persons."

⁴ DHS defines Sovereign Citizen Extremists as "Groups or individuals who facilitate or engage in acts of violence directed at public officials, financial institutions, and government facilities in support of their belief that the legitimacy of US citizenship should be rejected; almost all forms of established government, authority, and institutions are illegitimate; and that they are immune to federal, state, and local laws."

best support information sharing, resilience, and threat awareness efforts within the faith-based community.

DHS has also made significant advancements in operational CVE exchanges with international partners. We have international CVE partnerships with the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Canada, Belgium, Spain, Denmark, and Australia, as well as partnerships with international law enforcement organizations such as Europol. For the past year, DHS, Europol, and E.U. partners have exchanged information on U.S. and E.U. based fusion center best practices, CVE training standards, and research and case studies, including a joint case study on the 2011 Norway attacks. These exchanges help us support State and Local law enforcement by equipping them with up to date analysis on the behaviors and indicators of violent extremism, so they can prevent potential future violent extremist incidents from occurring in their communities. DHS is also currently working with our Canadian law enforcement partners to collaborate and partner on CVE curriculum development for frontline officers and police academies. This collaboration is at its nascent stages but we are aiming to form an operationally focused partnership between U.S. and Canadian law enforcement that will result in nationwide U.S. and Canadian delivery of CVE training and sharing of best practices. The Department is also aiming to expand CVE engagement with Australia. For example, DHS just signed a U.S.-Australia Joint Statement on Countering Transnational Crime, Terrorism, and Violent Extremism in Canberra in May 2012. Furthermore, DHS has coordinated with the Department of State to train field-based US Government officials, both domestically and internationally, on how to engage and partner with local communities to build community resilience against terrorist recruitment and radicalization to violence. This training has encouraged interagency relationship-building and ensures that US government officials operating in the CVE sphere, both domestically and at our embassies abroad, promote a consistent CVE message while offering the opportunity for an exchange of good practices.

The Department has also significantly expanded outreach to communities that may be targeted for recruitment by violent extremists and promote a greater awareness of Federal resources, programs, and security measures available to communities. For example, the DHS Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL) has held over 72 roundtable events nationwide since 2011, which have helped to address grievances, increase awareness of CVE resources, and build partnerships between state and local law enforcement, local government, and community stakeholders.

To further strengthen the partnership with law enforcement, DHS, the White House, NCTC, DOJ, and the FBI hosted 50 State, Local, and Tribal law enforcement officials at the White House on January 18, 2012, to inform the Federal government on how we can better support their local CVE efforts. Secretary Napolitano, Attorney General Holder, FBI Executive Assistant Director Giuliano, and Assistant to the President for Homeland Security and Counterterrorism Brennan participated. The feedback received in this workshop supported the Department's continued commitment to including CVE language in Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 grant guidance and the current development of online CVE training for officers nationwide. We are also working with law enforcement organizations, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the

Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), the Major County Sheriffs Association (MCSA), and the National Sheriffs Association (NSA), to implement CVE efforts and protect communities from violence. For example, following up on this White House event, DHS participated in a DOJ-hosted meeting at the IACP on May 3-4, 2012 with State and Local law enforcement officials and subject matter experts to discuss CVE training, how State and Local Law Enforcement are implementing CVE efforts locally, and how violent extremists use the internet and social media to convene, recruit and conspire. This meeting supports the development of a DOJ/Office of Community Oriented Policing Services guidebook on how community policing methods can be utilized to counter violent extremism.

Supporting Community Policing Efforts through Curriculum Development, Training and Grant Prioritization

DHS is in the final stages of developing and implementing CVE training for Federal, State, Local, and correctional facility law enforcement, as well as a training block for State police academies. The key goal of the training is to help law enforcement recognize the behaviors associated with violent extremist activity and distinguish between those behaviors that are potentially related to crime and those that are constitutionally protected or part of a religious or cultural practice.

As part of our effort to develop operationally accurate and appropriate training, DHS is working with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), MCCA, and the National Consortium for Advance Policing (NCAP) to complete a continuing education CVE curriculum for frontline and executive State and Local law enforcement. The first pilot was held on January 26, 2012 in San Diego and future pilots are being planned; the curriculum will be finalized by the end of 2012. In 2013, in collaboration with police associations and State and Local partners, our goal is to implement this curriculum nationwide; the MCCA has already passed a motion to adopt and implement this curriculum. DHS is also working with the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) to develop an internet-based CVE curriculum for State police academies, which will be introduced into academies before the end of 2012.

DHS is also working with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) to deliver a CVE curriculum for Federal law enforcement that will be integrated into existing training for new recruits. FLETC introduced this Federal curriculum to their trainers on February 16, 2012, and future training pilots are being planned in the next several months. In collaboration with the Interagency Threat Assessment Coordination Group (ITACG), Bureau of Prisons (BOP), and National Joint Terrorism Task Force (NJTTF), the Department is also working to implement CVE awareness training for frontline correctional facility, probation, and parole officers at the State and Local level. Training was piloted on March 28, 2012 in the Maryland State Police Academy and is now undergoing revision as a result of feedback received from the pilot; the curriculum will be finalized this summer. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is also developing a curriculum for rural correctional facility management.

Additionally, CRCL has provided training on religious and cultural practices and an understanding of constitutionally protected activity for over 3,000 State and Local law enforcement and fusion center personnel. CRCL is educating them on cultural and behavioral norms of how best to understand and engage communities that may be targeted for violent extremist recruitment. This CRCL training has been integrated into all of the CVE training efforts.

Developing this training is a priority because inappropriate and inaccurate training undermines community partnerships that are critical to preventing crime and negatively impacts efforts of law enforcement to identify legitimate behaviors and indicators of violent extremism.

In response to reports of operationally inaccurate training, DHS released *CVE Training Guidance and Best Practices* to all State and Local partners and grantees as part of DHS' grant guidance policy on October 7, 2011. We are also working closely with interagency partners, and law enforcement associations, such as the MCCA and senior law enforcement officials nationwide to improve CVE training standards. In January, 2012, the MCCA adopted a motion to ensure that all CVE training is operationally appropriate and accurate. The Department is also working to develop an accreditation process for CVE trainers and develop a train-the-trainer program by FY2013.

DHS has also expanded FY2012 grant guidance to include funding for CVE training, partnerships with local communities, and local CVE engagement in support of the SIP. The Department also co-chairs a working group on CVE Training with NCTC that helps ensure that training best practices are created and shared throughout the interagency.

To conclude, the Department has made substantial CVE progress over the past two years to help protect our communities from violent extremism. DHS has significantly improved our understanding of violent extremism through extensive analysis and research on the behaviors associated with violent extremism; enhanced operational partnerships with local communities, law enforcement, and international partners; and increased support for State, Local, Tribal and Territorial law enforcement through CVE training and grant prioritization.

At DHS, we believe that local authorities and community members are best able to identify those individuals or groups residing within their communities exhibiting dangerous behaviors—and intervene—before they commit an act of violence. Everyone has a role to play in the safety and security of our nation, and time and again we have seen the advantage of public vigilance and cooperation, through information-sharing, community-oriented policing, and citizen awareness. DHS will continue to support pre-existing partnerships between local authorities and communities, and their efforts to develop and implement information driven community based solutions to counter violent extremism and violent crime regardless of ideology. I respectfully request that my statement be made part of the official hearing record. Again, I thank the Committee for its support of the Department and its interest in this subject. The Department would be honored to respond to any questions for the record.