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**“From al-Shabaab to al-Nusra: How Westerners Joining Terror Groups
Overseas Affect The Homeland”**

The Testimony of:

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Introduction

I would firstly like to thank the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security for inviting me to submit this paper and give testimony on this very important issue to both our nations.

Whether the motivation has been foreign policy, national policy, ideological beliefs, military deployment, religious beliefs, territorial dispute or social unrest, the United Kingdom tragically has a significant history of being the victim of terrorist attack from a number of different national and international groups. This has ultimately led the government, the public and military sectors and the business community to re-think their ability to reduce the risks of further incidents taking place, prepare the UK for any eventuality, manage the outcomes of an attack and respond effectively to incidents on an almost continual basis over the years.

Whereas historically the intended targets in the UK were more readily identifiable (police, military and political) and the terrorists were known (the Irish Republican Army), the difference between the tactics, methodology and ideology of the last century and those of today couldn't be more extreme. The terrorist in the 21st century is more hidden from the authorities, partly because of their ability to integrate into our cosmopolitan society and be born and raised within the society they will be taught to hate. The internet also exacerbates this ability to remain anonymous and remote, transcending physical borders and with an ability to communicate their ideology to a wide audience incredibly quickly.

Unsurprisingly, it is these modern day terrorists who use a whole range of methodologies that will continue to receive the full attention of the authorities and, in the main, the focus is placed upon the Islamists and Jihadists who have managed to turn the teachings of the wholly peaceful Muslim religion into their own vehicle for hate and murder. This focus has meant that the global society has had to totally re-think its approach to not just the act of terrorism, but all aspects of causation and effect and a real effort to understand the issues underpinning such violence.

I have therefore been asked to comment within this paper upon how the United Kingdom is currently responding to returning individuals who appear to have undergone training abroad in order to inflict harm on UK communities and also detail the preparations that have been put in place that are designed to protect so called 'softer' targets from attack. This paper will of course not comment on confidential and secret arrangements that are currently deployed. Where I mention 'UK authorities', this term includes the activities of the government, the police service and the security services.

The Community-Based Responsibility

The ideal response to individual or groups of radicalised returning Jihadists is to make the environment so unwelcoming, that operating within society becomes difficult at least and with a high potential of being caught and introduced into the criminal justice system. Fortunately, the vast majority of people within the Muslim community in the UK has shown that it adheres to the true meaning of the Koran and not only maintains a peaceful co-existence with the many other communities, but has also shown its abhorrence to terrorists within



their midst.

Despite the lack of knowledge within the Muslim community about the different methods of countering radicalisation, the abhorrence often translates into assisting the authorities and security services with intelligence that regularly disrupts the planning stages of an attack and secures the convictions of offenders. The British policing style is one that has always been embedded within its communities and therefore locally deployed police officers are often the first to receive intelligence and they are therefore trained to gather and disseminate it quickly. The real difficulty for members of the community and police officers alike is that it is often difficult to differentiate between a radicalised person and passionate belief.

But the responsibility for identifying terrorist activity also extends to other environments where Jihadists operate. Only when they have reasonable grounds, the UK authorities identify and monitor potential terrorist planning activities within:

- Prisons and youth offender institutions
- Universities, colleges and schools (including faith schools)
- Mosques and other religious institutions
- Family environments
- And any environment where vulnerable potential recruits to the cause may gather. There is also some evidence that the gang culture is also a fertile ground for promoting Jihadist ideology

This of course includes the internet which the UK authorities are increasingly dedicating time and expertise to identifying offenders and interdicting planning processes.

Ironically, despite the fact that some radicalisation processes take place in education facilities, it is here that the all-important counter narrative is taking place and there is also a growing call for the wider Muslim community to take the lead in overtly countering the misrepresentation of their faith. It has been suggested that these initiatives could include:

- Condemning the legitimisation of Jihadism
- Providing greater amounts of community intelligence to the UK authorities
- Condemning the call for the death of non-believers
- Enabling the ability for a new generation of Muslims to have a balanced discussion within the community
- Deliver a balanced syllabus in Muslim faith schools
- Disband ‘Muslims only’ areas in Universities and colleges

There are already positive trends in the UK that members within the Muslim community are calling for change and the UK authorities are harnessing this enthusiasm.



At A More Strategic Level

Apart from the call for more work to take place within the Muslim community, observers are calling for new thinking that should come from the wider society; a balanced and non-sensational narrative from the media and where necessary, government led and funded initiatives. This strategic level call includes:

- De-radicalisation centres
- Providing contextual information to vulnerable groups
- Early educationally based interdiction to identified individuals before the risk of radicalisation takes place
- Learning opportunities from former Jihadists
- Promoting a better understanding of western political processes, democracy and secularism
- Denying Jihadists unchallenged platforms
- Promoting the recruiting of Muslim scholars with a balanced teaching syllabus
- Providing financial and institutional support to work centred in the community

How ‘Soft’ Are The UK’s ‘Soft Targets?’

There is an increasing list of evidence that so called ‘soft targets’ around the World are becoming more popular as terrorist targets than previously experienced. Reasons for this change in tactic could include the fact that many previously preferred targets such as embassies, military installations and police stations are better protected than ever before and the attacker stands to fail in their objective. Another could be that a higher ‘kill rate’ could be just as easily achieved in crowded places in the neighbourhoods where people gather to shop, visit, relax and work. This latter point is also far more likely to have a more emotional and psychological impact on society because this is the very place where people live and retreat from the stresses elsewhere. If their homes, shopping centres and schools are attacked by gunmen or bombers who select random targets, then society would quite rightly feel even more exposed than if it occurred in a city centre.

Just for clarification, I would list soft targets as being:

- Hotels
- Airports (airside)
- Train, Marine and bus systems
- Shopping centres
- Tourist attractions
- Universities and colleges
- Travelling business people
- Cinemas and Theatres
- Hospitals
- Office blocks



The Westgate Centre in Nairobi, the bus bomber in Bulgaria, the 10 man attack in Mumbai and the gunman in Aurora, Colorado and the suicide bombings in London are all tragic reminders about how vulnerable these types of locations are and unfortunately there are many more examples. Just like other countries across the World, the UK and the business sector reviews these incidents and tries to learn, embed and sustain the lessons into its own society and organisations respectfully.

The considerations of applying a much stricter security regime to the above list are necessity, reasonableness, intelligence, societal expectation, cost and people’s rights. I believe that the pivotal consideration amongst this list is whether or not there is sufficient intelligence to believe that an attack on a soft target is likely, if so then the other considerations fall into place. A very close second to intelligence is reasonableness. If society can understand and accept the presence of these two principles, then target hardening of the soft targets is more likely.

The UK already has a number of projects that have been developed and delivered for a number of years. As I mentioned before, the UK has suffered from intermittent attacks in the past and the following initiatives are our way of hardening soft targets.

But before I go into more detail, I think that it is important to make the point that for many years UK authorities have engaged with the national and international business sectors with the objective of intelligence sharing, sharing best practice, briefing staff, developing alliances and working on resilience projects. Like other developed countries there are a number of non-governmental organisations that represent subject matter companies (technologies, cyber, physical security, CCTV, petro chemical, etc.) who meet and discuss specific solutions to resilience issues.

My own company, City Security and Resilience Networks (CSARN) is a not for profit organisation that brings together global corporates, government departments, law enforcement and security services across the UK and more recently Australia in order to enable these entities to share and work more effectively together. This dialogue and sharing activity has an impact on a number of business sectors, including the ‘soft’ targets mentioned in this paper, many of whom are members of CSARN.

The outcomes of this activity are manifest in the different resilience areas that the UK authorities and the business community focus upon, such as:

- The convergence of inter-discipline planning and delivery
- Business Crisis Management planning
- Cyber system resilience
- Physical security
- Technological security advancement
- Multi agency emergency response
- Crisis Leadership
- Information and Intelligence exchange
- Counter espionage



- Organisational resilience
- Effective fast time communication
- Fraud
- Crime prevention
- Regional partnerships
- Major event planning
- The insider threat
- Pandemics

Another outcome is the rise over many years of the UK authorities, the business and voluntary sectors working and training together. There are a number of regular ‘live play’ and large scale table top training sessions that tests the coterminous responses from government departments, financial authorities, the voluntary sector, police officers, special forces and businesses. This regularity of working together promotes familiarity between the decision-makers, the differing systems, the abilities and constraints of each organisation, the strengths and weaknesses and the opportunity to learn and change process and practice. Such joint training ensures that, in extremis, the UK authorities and the business community deploy their assets together and in a co-ordinated way.

Most of the participants come from the soft target community and there is a real sense that hardening and securing their assets is their responsibility and over the years these organisations have built their capability in training their crisis leaders and crisis teams, reviewed their ability to prevent or recover from a sustained cyber-attack, briefing and training their security teams and introducing a security minded culture.

There are two long standing national level projects that are worthy of note:

Project Griffin

Project Griffin is a police led initiative to protect the UK’s cities and communities from the threat of terrorism. It brings together and coordinates the resources of the police, emergency services, local authorities, business and the private sector security industry. Project Griffin was developed by the City of London Police and formally introduced in London in April 2004 as a joint venture between the City and Metropolitan police forces. Its remit was to advise and familiarise managers, security officers and employees of large public and private sector organisations across the capital on counter hostile reconnaissance, security, counter-terrorism and crime prevention issues.

Following its unqualified success in London, Project Griffin has been recognised as National best practice and is being implemented by police forces cities and communities throughout the UK. It has also generated interest and acclaim overseas, particularly here in the United States, in Canada and Australia.

Project Griffin seeks to enlist the help and support of individuals or groups responsible for the safety and security of buildings, businesses, districts or neighbourhoods. It provides an official and direct channel through which the police can share and update vital information relating to security and crime prevention.



Its principal aims are to:

- Raise awareness of current terrorist and crime issues
- Share and gather intelligence and information
- Build and maintain effective working relationships
- Seek solutions to defeating terrorism and crime
- Maintain trust and confidence in the police and other authorities
- Empower people to report suspicious activity and behaviour

The operational framework of Project Griffin consists of four main strands:

1. Awareness Days

These are staged locally by participating police forces to introduce the concept and establish relationships and networks. They focus on how to recognise, respond to, and report suspicious activity and behaviour. They also help participants think about their own local procedures for dealing with certain types of incidents and emergencies.

2. Online Refresher Module

An informative, interactive and easy-to-follow refresher package has been developed to help keep participants engaged and informed. Successful completion of the module also formally recognises their participation.

3. Bridge Calls

Most participating police forces employ a system of regular Bridge Calls, whether by conference call, SMS, pager or email. These keep individuals and groups aware of current information and intelligence, as well as issues or incidents affecting their particular area.

4. Emergency deployments

Although the primary role of Project Griffin is to focus on community awareness, surveillance and reporting, additional procedures might be activated in times of emergency. Police forces, utilising civilian powers, might seek to deploy Project Griffin registered personnel for activities such as setting up cordons or high-visibility neighbourhood patrolling.

Project Argus

Project Argus is an initiative developed by the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) and delivered by local police Counter Terrorism Security Advisers (CTSAs) throughout the UK. The three hour multimedia simulation poses questions and dilemmas for participants working in syndicates and aims to raise awareness of the threat from terrorism, providing practical advice on preventing, handling and recovering from an attack. It is aimed at managers and assistant managers and can be presented at a police station, or at the location of choice and it is free of charge.



Project Argus sessions are designed and delivered for the following sectors:

- Office and retail
- Night time economy
- Hotels
- Education
- Health
- Designers, planners and architects

Both Project Griffin and Project Argus have been widely embraced by the business community as a means to improve the way in which staff individually approaches security issues and be more readily able to identify threats and report suspicious behaviour, such as hostile reconnaissance, to police officers.

Conclusion

The UK shows its understanding of the terrorist threat to its shores by its ability to bring the authorities and the business communities together with the intention to ensure that it can recover quickly if attacked. The complacency doesn't exist at the strategic level as new ideas continue to take traction as new threats reveal themselves. The challenge has always been to secure the heart and mind engagement of professionals and decision-makers who have not necessarily succeeded through the resilience industry route and who may not be able to give due credence or effort to the solutions.

The movement and training of the radicalised should be the alarm bell that sounds as a reminder to all that the global community should be addressing these concerns both nationally and internationally together; something that the US and the UK have always done and long may that sharing and working relationship continue.

The UK has a track record for absorbing learning and working in partnership both at home and abroad and thankfully there isn't any sign that this will stop. The soft target issue is of great concern to us and so it should be; as we all see the changing tactic of the terrorist towards crowded and comparatively unprotected sites in order to increase their ability to kill more effectively for their cause.

The UK authorities will continue to work, brief, train, educate, learn, share and listen to its partners. In that way, we all stand a much greater chance of protecting every part of society from the constantly changing face of terrorism.

