



WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF

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HOMELAND
SECURITY**

FOR A HEARING ON

“Confronting White Supremacy: Adequacy of the Federal Response”

BEFORE THE

**UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
CIVIL RIGHTS AND CIVIL LIBERTIES**

**Tuesday, June 4, 2019
Washington, DC**

**Written Testimony of
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**Before the
U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Reform
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties**

June 4, 2019

Chairman Raskin, Ranking Member Roy, and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for holding today's hearing on combatting violent white supremacy. Before going any further, I want to make clear—unequivocally and without hesitation—that violent white supremacy is abhorrent. We must do everything we can to prevent attacks similar to the ones on the San Diego and Pittsburgh synagogues from occurring, and I pledge to do just that. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is committed to preventing all forms of terrorism, including both international and domestic, as well as preventing acts of targeted violence. I am grateful for this opportunity to discuss the evolving threat, the Department's current capabilities, and opportunities for Congress to support the Department's important mission.

As you know, DHS shares the homeland counterterrorism mission with several interagency partners, particularly the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). The FBI is the lead agency for investigating terrorist threats, including domestic terrorist threats, as well as hate crimes, and DOJ is the lead for prosecuting federal criminal offenses related to terrorism. DHS's mission focuses on a wide variety of activities concerning prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. For today's hearing, the Department's prevention and protection capabilities are most pertinent. These activities focus on informing, equipping, and training homeland security partners across the United States to prevent terrorism and targeted violence.

Importantly, the Department's tools are intentionally agnostic to ideological motives for violence. However, the increase in violent white supremacy and the global reach that we witnessed through the horrid attacks in Christchurch demand that we continue to ramp up efforts to prevent violent extremism inclusive of this ideology. As we examine the Department's path forward for prevention efforts, it is useful to review how both the threats and our prevention efforts have evolved.

The Evolving Terrorist Threat

My tenure in government began in 2001, and—like many of my contemporaries—the September 11th attacks changed the trajectory of my career. I served in the Domestic Counterterrorism Directorate at the White House and worked on the policies and programs we needed to prevent another catastrophic terrorist attack. We designed counterterrorism systems and measures to address the threat from al-Qaeda – primarily focusing on complex, coordinated attacks with planning cycles ranging from months to years, and attackers or facilitators that traveled to training camps or otherwise entered the United States from abroad. We established watchlisting procedures; we designed and implemented a domestic information-sharing infrastructure to ensure threat information was passed between federal, state, tribal, territorial, and local governments; we invested in providing classified information systems to our state and local government partners; we provided training and grant dollars to strengthen non-federal law enforcement capabilities; the FBI expanded the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs); and the Terrorist Threat Integration Center (TTIC) evolved into the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), with the mission of developing a holistic view of the threat.

In 2008, the threat evolved when U.S. authorities were alerted to a trend of young Somali-American men traveling abroad to join al-Shabaab. Parents began reaching out to authorities at all levels of government asking how to stop this phenomenon, which led to the development of community engagement-based prevention efforts that continue today.

In 2014, the threat evolved again when the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) established its self-declared caliphate, and individuals across the world traveled to join the cause. This evolution included a more concerning trend: ISIS introduced the notion of radicalization to

violence in isolation via the Internet. Homegrown Violent Extremists (HVE), or individuals radicalized within the United States and inspired to commit attacks on behalf of a foreign terrorist organization, were the primary focus of prevention efforts in recent years and remain a key focus area today.

The threat has evolved yet again. Now, unfortunately, we have domestic terrorist movements borrowing from the ISIS handbook and using social media to recruit, radicalize, inspire, and mobilize Americans to violence. We know the rise in violent white supremacy is partly fueled by their use of social media platforms that connect like-minded individuals who are geographically isolated to share hate-filled, violent material. This latest evolution in terrorist threats occurs in relative isolation and involves a smaller window between radicalization and violent acts. Together, these factors make it extremely difficult for law enforcement to detect and thwart potential attacks.

Our post 9/11 CT capabilities, underpinned by the authorities provided by Congress and legal framework for prosecutions, as robust as they are, were not designed to deal with this type of threat. And, while we have made progress in developing the tools necessary for this new threat, the solutions need to be scaled to be effective.

A Threat Management Approach to Prevention

The United States is in the midst of a multi-year trend of increased targeted attacks and hate crimes. The majority of this violent activity is perpetrated by disaffected, mentally unwell, violence-prone individuals informed by online content while searching for a social connection and sense of self-worth. Ultimately, these individuals connect with a violent extremist cause or formulate a grievance to satisfy their longing for self-worth, and the resulting act of violence is usually in furtherance of an ideological cause, but unrelated to a specific terrorist or violent extremist group.

For nearly 25 years, the U.S. Secret Service has conducted evidence-based research on individuals that carry out acts of targeted violence through the National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC). Last year, the NTAC published findings from their study on 28 incidents of mass attacks in 2017. This study defined mass attacks as incidents, “during which three or more

persons were harmed, [and] were carried out in public places within the United States The resulting loss of 147 lives and injury to nearly 700 others had a devastating impact on our nation as a whole.”¹

Critically, the NTAC research demonstrated that “regardless of whether the attacks were acts of workplace violence, domestic violence, school-based violence, or terrorism,” similar themes were evident among the perpetrators, including:

- Nearly half were motivated by a *personal grievance* related to a workplace, domestic, or other issue.
- Over half had histories of *criminal charges, mental health symptoms*, and/or *illicit substance use or abuse*.
- All had at least one *significant stressor* within the last five years, and over half had indications of *financial instability* in that timeframe.
- Over three-quarters made *concerning communications and/or elicited concern* from others prior to carrying out their attacks. On average, those who did elicit concern caused more harm than those who did not.

Likewise, research demonstrates remarkable similarities among individuals who have radicalized to carry out acts of violence, regardless of the ideology motivating the attack. For example, a 2016 study from DOJ’s National Institute of Justice conducted a significant comparison of lone actor terrorists and mass murderers and concluded that “both offenders are very similar in terms of their behaviors – this in turn suggests that similar threat and risk assessment frameworks may be applicable to both types of offenders.”²

Whether it is an attack on a school, a nightclub, a synagogue, mosque or church, a government facility, or a public space – it needs to stop.

We must do more as a society for those individuals who are vulnerable to radicalizing to violence. Our prevention efforts need to assist vulnerable individuals before they cross the

¹ https://www.secretservice.gov/data/protection/ntac/USSS_NTAC-Mass_Attacks_in_Public_Spaces-2017.pdf

² John Horgan et al., “Across the Universe? A Comparative Analysis of Violent Behavior and Radicalization Across Three Offender Types with Implications for Criminal Justice Training and Education,” June 2016, Available at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/249937.pdf>.

criminal threshold. And, some of that assistance is best provided outside of government. We need a “whole of society” approach.

For the past several years, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials have worked closely with academia, mental health professionals, educators, and faith leaders to better understand the threat we now face and develop strategies to address it. A growing number of jurisdictions are adopting a multi-disciplinary “threat management” strategies of prevention. While the implementation is going to look different based on the culture and laws of a given jurisdiction, a threat management approach generally includes the following:

1. Reporting, Intake and Referral: A member of the community (usually a friend, family member, co-worker, teacher, etc.) reports behaviors of concern to designated authorities and the information is forwarded to the appropriate entity for evaluation.
2. Threat and Behavioral Assessment: this is conducted by a multi-disciplinary team of law enforcement and mental health professionals and often others relevant to the particular community. The assessment leads to one of two options:
 - a. Disruption: If a crime occurred or a criminal threshold was met, law enforcement entities would engage in investigative, arrest, or prosecution-related activities.
 - b. Threat Management: If a crime did not occur, but the threat was assessed to still exist, then a multi-disciplinary approach would be engaged to address underlying issues facilitating the desire to commit acts of violence. The goal of this approach would be to reduce the individuals’ social or psychological commitment to violence. The effort often includes increasing the engagement between individuals and local community members and agencies and requires continual risk re-evaluation.

DHS efforts are, in part, based on supporting stakeholders who are working to implement a model of this kind. One of the ways DHS offers support is by providing grants to non-governmental and governmental organizations. For example, one of the grants from the Department’s Countering Violent Extremism Grant Program—given to the National Governor’s Association—is being used to develop models like I just described in four states: Virginia, Colorado, Illinois and Michigan. The same framework has also been effective in stopping attacks in Los Angeles; CA; Montgomery County, MD; Dearborn, MI; and Rutland, VT.

In another DHS-funded project, the National Consortium for Advanced Policing is working with the Major City Chiefs Association to develop an implementation guide for terrorism prevention for major city police departments.

Moving Forward: DHS Building out the Prevention Framework

As the threat has evolved since the Department's creation in 2003, numerous DHS programs and activities were created to provide support to our state, local, tribal, territorial, and private sector partners. I have included a list of these efforts as an appendix to this testimony. However, a strategic approach to prevention has been lacking. For example, FEMA is the primary lead for the response and recovery mission; CISA for the protection mission – but prevention has been left without a primary champion. So, DHS is taking deliberate steps to ensure we have a comprehensive approach to preventing all forms terrorism and targeted violence.

Last month, Acting Secretary McAleenan announced the creation of the Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP), which builds on previous DHS initiatives and supports the recently released National Strategy for Counterterrorism by emphasizing the importance of preventing terrorist radicalization and recruitment while also countering targeted violence, such as mass casualty shootings and school violence. TVTP will serve as the headquarters office responsible for coordinating the existing DHS terrorism prevention enterprise, which is outlined in the appendix. TVTP will also work closely with our federal partners at DOJ, FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education, and others who have important roles in the prevention mission to coordinate federal efforts.

Further, TVTP is developing the prevention framework that DHS will implement over the coming years. The framework will leverage the findings from the grants, which are being evaluated now, as well as the results of a study the Department funded from the RAND

Corporation³. This summer we are also engaging in further dialogue and meetings with stakeholders to ensure the framework appropriately incorporates various perspective and needs.

DHS will continue to build upon its current training and awareness briefings for our governmental and non-governmental partners at the state, local, tribal, and territorial levels. We need law enforcement to protect our communities, and we need mental health professionals, social services, and civil society to get involved where law enforcement cannot or should not take the lead. In addition, we will evaluate the grant program, which ends this year, to determine its effectiveness and how to appropriately allocate funding to enable local capacity building and innovative solutions to counter the threat, which will continue to evolve.

Although our primary focus is building local capacity, we also recognize there is another indispensable role for the Federal Government – to enhance federal coordination and support for our partners. We will continue to ensure that threat information on all types of violent extremism is shared with state, local, tribal, and territorial partners. We will also work to combat terrorists’ use of the Internet to plot attacks or radicalize individuals to violence. All while, of course and without question, fully respecting and protecting civil rights, civil liberties, and privacy—leveraging the expertise of the Department’s Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and Privacy Offices.

Violent White Supremacy

As I close, let me return to what I stated at the beginning. The increase in violent white supremacy is abhorrent. While our prevention tools are generally designed to be agnostic to the ideology, I would like to highlight certain initiatives the Department is engaged in with respect to this specific threat. They include:

³ “Practical Terrorism Prevention: Reexamining U.S. National Approaches to Addressing the Threat of Ideologically Motivated Violence”. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2647.html

- Last year, our Regional Director for Terrorism Prevention based in Southern California worked throughout San Diego and Orange Counties to support local prevention activities specifically aimed at violent white supremacy. One result of those efforts is the engagement with the nonprofit Life After Hate” (whose mission is to help individuals leave hate groups), which is now training regional law enforcement on violent white supremacy.
- In Colorado, our Regional Coordinator for Terrorism Prevention has used the trainings I described earlier—community meetings and other direct assistance—to support a series of local programs addressing targeted violence and terrorism prevention. Because of her work, there are more than a dozen instances where these local stakeholders intervened with individuals radicalizing to violent white supremacy.
- The Department recently co-hosted a third Digital Forum on Terrorism Prevention in Santa Monica, California. Focused on violent white supremacy and related domestic terrorism, the Forum facilitated engagement and information sharing between 70 representatives of civic organizations, non-profits, technology companies, and government agencies on how to be more effective online. DHS co-hosted the event with the Anti-Defamation League, the California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services, the RAND Corporation, the Hacker Fund, and Tech Against Terrorism.
- A majority of grant recipients developed programs that addressed all forms of terrorism, including domestic terrorism.

DHS recognizes there is a lot of work to do and that the threat continues. It is unacceptable that anyone in the United States be made to feel afraid because of race or religion, nor should anyone be fearful of attending school or a house of worship or of visiting a public space. We are working expeditiously to ensure the Department is postured to better prevent and protect against all forms of targeted violence regardless of the ideological motivation and we look forward to your support in this effort.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Subcommittee to discuss the Department's efforts to combat domestic terrorism, in particular by maturing the prevention work of DHS. I look forward to answering your questions.

Appendix: Summary of DHS Prevention and Protection Programs and Activities

Office of Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention:

The newly established Office for Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention (TVTP) serves as the Headquarters Office responsible for coordinating the existing DHS terrorism prevention enterprise, and administering or coordinating key lines of effort which support the Department's prevention efforts. These efforts include:

- Training and awareness briefings for law enforcement, communities, and social media companies on domestic and international terrorism.
- Working with social media companies to combat terrorist exploitation of the internet by providing briefings and creating forums where the tech sector can meet with community leaders who want to be more effective online.
- Administering the CVE grant program to identify innovative solutions and models that develop community resilience, build local capacity, challenge extremist narratives, train and engage the community, and manage interventions.
- Providing field support to state and local governments to develop community-specific approaches to preventing terrorism and targeted violence.
- Identifying and promoting prevention and protection best practices, research, tools and programs.

TVTP works closely with our state, local, tribal and territorial partners, as well as our federal partners at DOJ, FBI, the National Counterterrorism Center, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Education, who have important roles in the prevention mission to coordinate federal efforts

Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) manages a variety of programs that support the security of critical infrastructure, including the Hometown Security initiative, Active Shooter Preparedness, School Safety and Security, and Bombing Prevention.

In addition, CISA operates the following:

- Protective Security Advisor (PSA) Program. PSAs advise and assist state, local, and private sector officials and critical infrastructure facility owners and operators. PSAs also conduct joint site visits and vulnerability assessments of critical infrastructure assets with the FBI, and they work with the U.S. Secret Service to provide vulnerability assessments, security planning, and coordination during large-scale special events.
- Soft Targets and Crowded Places Task Force provides the private sector with risk mitigation solutions for a multitude of attack vectors to protect against acts of terrorism and targeted violence.

The Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties (CRCL)

DHS CRCL through its Community Engagement Section conducts Quarterly Community Engagement Roundtables that help develop the relationships and trust necessary for CRCL and TVTP to implement the Community Awareness Briefings and the Community Resilience Exercise for the public and communities. In FY 2018, CRCL conducted a total of 75 roundtables. To further engage with communities, CRCL also coordinates the Incident Community Coordination Team (ICCT) national conference call mechanism which allows DHS and our federal partners in Washington to engage with impacted communities at the grassroots level in the immediate aftermath of an incident. Recent ICCT calls were held in the immediate aftermath of the Tree of Life Synagogue attack, the attack on the Mosques in New Zealand, the attacks in Sri Lanka, and the attack on the synagogue in Poway, California. ICCT calls average between 350 to 500 stakeholder participants. Together with the Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC), CRCL and TVTP launched a Law Enforcement Awareness Briefing program for state, local, and tribal law enforcement on creating terrorism prevention partnerships. All of these provide education and training on the impact of international and all types of domestic terrorism in the United States. FLETC also provides a wide range of other training to federal, state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement on targeted violence and terrorism prevention.

Furthermore, CRCL and the Privacy Office provide training and assistance to the national network of fusion centers, so that they have a better understanding of the information sharing environment.

Other DHS programs with a nexus to prevention and protection:

- The Secret Service National Threat Assessment Center (NTAC) conducts research and training on the prevention of targeted violence, including mass attacks and school attacks. NTAC developed the Threat Assessment model used by the Secret Service and adapted those protocols to assist state, local, tribal, and territorial law enforcement, schools, and workplaces in developing targeted violence prevention plans.
- The National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Program, in DHS's Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A)—currently under development—is intended to facilitate the reporting of tips and leads associated with terrorism and targeted violence incidents and associated mass casualty events. This program builds upon and enhances the existing Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative (NSI) by focusing on threats where race, religion or ethnicity is a motivating factor. Additionally, I&A publishes analysis on terrorism for distribution to state and local law enforcement as well as other stakeholders.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trains state, local, tribal, and territorial governments and provides funding for training on counterterrorism, resilience, and terrorism prevention. For example, the FY 2019 Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides funding support for security-related activities to nonprofit organizations at risk of a terrorist attack, and FEMA's Center for Faith Initiatives provides a resource guide on protecting houses of worship.
- The Science & Technology Directorate (S&T) supports the Department by funding research on terrorism prevention and conducts evaluations of terrorism prevention programs. S&T applies scientific, engineering, analytic, and innovative approaches to deliver timely solutions on causes of terrorism, the prevention of terrorism and mass attacks, resilience to and recovery from these attacks, and evaluation of prevention programs.