

House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence
Subcommittee on Terrorism, HUMINT, Analysis, and Counterintelligence
July 27, 2011
Opening Statement

Mrs. Myrick

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Human Intelligence, Analysis, and Counterintelligence will come to order.

I would like to welcome everyone to this important hearing on radicalization in America. This is an issue of utmost importance to the national security of our country. The House Intelligence Committee is regularly briefed by intelligence agencies on radicalization in a classified setting, but it is also important that we hear from outside experts to gain their perspective and ideas for solutions.

As such, when the Bipartisan Policy Center recently released its report entitled, “Preventing Violent Radicalization in America” I thought it important to hold a hearing in an open setting so that Members, others in the government, and the American public could hear the views of some of the foremost non-government experts on this topic. This is especially important and timely considering our government is developing a national counter-radicalization strategy as we speak.

The report we are basing our hearing on today, of which each member has a copy, opens with an important statistic: a recent independent study by the New America Foundation and Syracuse University showed that “nearly half” of the al-Qa’ida-related homegrown terrorism since September 11, 2001 occurred in the last two years. Yet this issue is not adequately being addressed at any level of government. The case of Samir Khan, the former Charlotte resident who now leads al-Qa’ida in the Arabian Peninsula’s media operation, was cited in the report as an example of government and community inaction: “Everyone was watching, but at no point did anyone [except his father] challenge his behavior.” Since he is from my hometown, I have been following Khan for some time and I am interested to hear from our experts how youth, like Khan, are being radicalized in our own backyard.

This report raises a number of important issues and provides some notable recommendations that I would like to explore further. My top goal for this hearing is that Members will walk away with a better understanding of the radicalization process, as well as an understanding of tangible things we can do to address the problem of homegrown radicalization. While there is no shortage of ideas about the causes and implications of radicalization in the public conversation, what is generally lacking are proposals for specific action the government, or American citizens, can take to combat radicalization. This report takes a step in this direction, and I would like to hear with more specificity what actions the witnesses suggest we take.

Perhaps the most effective way for us to develop an action plan is to hear about counter-radicalization efforts that are already underway and to pull from them best practices and lessons learned. One such effort that is cited in the report is the United Kingdom's "Prevent" policy. Has Prevent worked as intended? If so, what specific programs in Prevent should we look at when considering creating local counter-radicalization programs in the US? What are the issues that led the UK to make significant changes to the program this year? Likewise, what can we learn from the Dutch model? How did the Dutch get local communities involved in pushing back against extremist messages? What can we learn from their approach to addressing and challenging radical ideologies, which is one of the main drivers of radicalization? While the report makes the point that counter-radicalization must be tailored to suit the nature of specific communities, considering the urgency of the issue, we should not start from scratch in developing a counter-radicalization plan in America.

Domestically, our staff recently traveled to Portland, Oregon to meet with the U.S. Attorney there, who has developed an effective counter-radicalization effort in response to the attempted bombing at the Christmas tree lighting ceremony last year—an effort highlighted in the report. The Attorney General has empowered U.S. Attorneys to undertake this effort, but it has had mixed results so far. Can individual efforts like that in Portland be applied across the country?

This leads to my next point. The report states that most counter-radicalization is local, and suggests that while the federal government can provide guidance, resources, and coordination, relationships and networks have to be leveraged from the ground up. I would be interested in hearing from our witnesses how the federal government can best position itself to play the proper role in this effort. On what should we base resource allocation decisions? Who should coordinate and help manage counter-radicalization efforts? How can we compel state and local governments to address the radicalization issue head-on, and more importantly how can we help the affected communities, families, and parents themselves?

Lastly, one of the most important recommendations in this report is that regarding community outreach. I think forming partnerships with communities is vital to any counter-radicalization effort because the government can only do so much. It is the communities themselves who must stand up and push back against the extremist ideologies and messages targeting our young people. So how do we determine the proper partners we should work with and empower? And when we do form partnerships, what is the "ask" this report says we should present to them?

The attacks in Norway last week were a tragedy. The motivations behind the attacker's actions are no more tolerable than that of Islamic extremists, and this is an issue we are looking at closely on the Intelligence Committee. I recognize there is a threat in this country from extremists like Timothy McVeigh. I also recognize that American law enforcement and our Intelligence Community have been studying these groups and individuals for decades and have developed strong tools to mitigate much of that threat. My concern is that today we see an increasing number of Muslim youth radicalizing in America and attempting plots here in the U.S. or traveling abroad to join terrorist groups. Unlike extremists such as McVeigh, our government knows little about

how groups like al-Qa'ida are radicalizing our youth and pushing them to commit acts of terrorism. We must learn how this is happening so that we can develop tools to help prevent this.

So, with these and other issues in mind, today we welcome Dr. Peter Neumann, the principal author of the Bipartisan Policy Center's radicalization report. Dr. Neumann is a visiting scholar at the Bipartisan Policy Center and the Founding Director of the International Center for the Study of Radicalization at King's College in London. Dr. Neumann will summarize the report and discuss its findings and recommendations.

Sitting next to Dr. Neumann, I am pleased to welcome Dr. John Gannon, a member of the Bipartisan Policy Center's National Security Preparedness Group. Dr. Gannon is currently the President of BAE Systems Intelligence and Security Sector following a distinguished career in the Intelligence Community culminating with his appointment to serve as CIA's Deputy Director for Intelligence. He was also the first staff director of the permanent House Homeland Security Committee. Dr. Gannon will be able to draw from this experience to provide the subcommittee with his analysis of the issue and his thoughts on solutions. Thank you both for taking the time to be here to discuss this pressing issue.

I'd now like to invite Mr. Thompson to make an opening statement.

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