

**Testimony of
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**Countering the Radicalization Threat: An Intelligence-Led Policing
Challenge**

**Subcommittee on the Intelligence, Information Sharing and Terrorism
Risk Assessment
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland security
Honorable Jane Harman, Chairwoman
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Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member Reichert and members of the committee, thank you for holding this hearing on the pressing issue of Radicalization.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the City of Los Angeles have forged successful relationships with our local, state, and federal partners to begin examining and responding to the growing threat posed by radicalization. However, we need continued support for our efforts across a number of areas of concern. Today, I will address three issues of interest to this committee:

- First, the growing threat of Muslim radicalization in the United States, specifically here in the Los Angeles area, and the challenges posed to local, state, and federal authorities.
- Second, the connection between prison radicalization and the potential of homegrown Islamist terrorism.
- Third, the role that a congressionally-funded National Counter Terrorism Academy (NCTA) serving state and local law enforcement would have in countering the these threats.

Beginning in May of 2005, four radical Muslim suspects - armed with shotguns – went on a significant crime spree that by itself would have been noteworthy. Eleven times they robbed or attempted to rob gas stations in the

cities of Los Angeles, Torrance, Playa Del Rey, Bellflower, Pico Rivera, Walnut, Orange, Playa Vista, and Fullerton.

In investigating the crimes, the experienced detectives of the Torrance Police Department focused on the basics of any investigation: evidence, witnesses, and modus operandi. A lucky break occurred when a cell phone belonging to one of the suspects was recovered. When a search was conducted of the suspect's apartment the detective also observed disturbing evidence. This evidence included body armor, knives, and other evidence of the crime.

However, when the detective noticed jihad-related literature and the addresses of potential "targets" the detective fell back on his previous training as a Terrorism Liaison Officer (TLO) and recognized this as a pre-incident indicator to a terrorist attack. As a TLO, this detective had received minimal formalized terrorism training – in comparison to the routine training received by bona fide counter-terrorism professionals. Yet this training was sufficient enough to arm the Torrance detective with usable information.

To most detectives this "disturbing evidence" would have appeared as inconsequential to the robbery charge. Some of it, political or philosophical in nature, would have appeared as mere ramblings during a routine search. Directions, maps, and other non-overtly criminal articles would usually be brushed aside as miscellaneous. To the trained observer, however, the evidence clearly pointed to only one possibility – homegrown terrorism.

It was at the Los Angeles Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) where LAPD task force officers - tenured detectives - and FBI special agents worked together diligently and tirelessly. As a result of this extraordinary teamwork, not only were the suspects apprehended but a larger and greater conspiracy was uncovered.

Experienced local detectives and federal agents conducted textbook interrogations of the suspects revealing a surprising fact. The cell of robbers and alleged terrorists were further along in their conspiracy than anyone knew or expected. These homegrown terrorists had already conducted surveillance of military recruitment stations, the Israeli consulate, El-Al airlines, and prominent synagogues. According to the federal indictment against the JIS members, they had selected attack periods "to maximize the number of casualties."

Further investigation revealed that this group was aligned with a California prison group known as Jamiyyat Ul Islam Is Saheeh (JIS), which translates to "Assembly of Authentic Islam." JIS practiced a radical form of Islam that was neither authentic nor peaceful. An inmate, Kevin Lamar James, founded this radical group in 1997 at California's notorious Folsom Prison. James, a Los Angeles-based gang member serving time for robbery, directed his followers "to target for violent attack any enemies of Islam or 'infidels,' including the United States government and Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel."¹

Hiding behind the guise of religious freedom, James' JIS used assumed protections such as the freedom of religion to advance its beliefs and pressure new recruits and converts into a hate-based cult. It affiliated itself with Al-Qaeda's philosophies and targeting array (*"The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies -- civilians and military -- is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it."*²). James has much in common with Ahmed Ressam, Richard Reid, Abu Musab al Zarqawi, and Jose Padilla. All were street thugs radicalized while behind bars. All were first encountered by local law enforcement before they were radicalized. And all plotted to kill Americans.

The tentacles of JIS reached beyond the prison's walls. A released member was able to recruit two otherwise law-abiding residents into a terrorist cell. He convinced them to rob and eventually commit terrorist acts for JIS. He also indoctrinated them into the radical philosophy of hate.

In this case, "Islamist" radicals were taken into custody, preventing terrorism at home. It was demonstrated that formal education in the subject matter of terrorist tradecraft, together with modern intelligence-led policing strategies and proven investigative techniques, could be used successfully to counter and prevent terrorism.

The successful approach taken by all participating agencies involved in the Torrance case is no accident. Rather, it was the result of the dedication,

¹ Kevin Lamar James

² Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, World Islamic Front Statement, 23 February 1998

training, and expertise of the officers involved. More, however, can be done to locate and stop other attacks. We need to educate all of local law enforcement about counter-terrorism techniques and investigations. In this respect, as a region, as a state, and as a nation, in the Torrance Case we dodged a bullet.

Whether the motivation is religious fundamentalism, anti-government sentiment, or the disaffected loner, radicalized groups or individuals are increasingly perpetrating terrorism. A substantial attack upon U.S. soil is increasingly likely. The answer rests with prevention.

The nation's 12,000 FBI Special Agents are indeed some of the best investigators in the world, and the training they receive sets the benchmark for law enforcement. Despite their talents and abilities, the workload of most special agents is overwhelming and their enforcement scope is limited. However, over 700,000 local law enforcement officers in the U.S. are already on the front lines, fighting crime and gathering critical information on a daily basis.

Providing these 700,000 front-line officers standardized counter-terrorism training will transform these first responders into a coordinated collection and prevention asset. Such an approach can be a true force multiplier.

The only way to prevent radicalization is to end the conditions that foster it. When efforts at prevention are unsuccessful or impractical, a fully trained

and seamlessly integrated public safety force is required to recognize pre-incident indicators and develop interdiction, disruption, or arrest strategies.

Furthermore, we must cultivate a working relationship with all religious groups in our region, and gain their trust. It is these congregations that will provide the needed intelligence of disaffected membership. However, a suspicious and frightened religious community will react to knee-jerk outreach efforts as dubious or disingenuous.

We have initiated a partnership with the Center for Policing Terrorism (CPT), which is part of the Manhattan Institute, a think tank in New York City. My working relationship with the Institute dates back to my days as the Commissioner of New York Police Department, where the Institute provided some of the intellectual force behind our crime reduction strategies and assisted in their dissemination. Similarly, the CPT leverages world-class intellectuals to help the LAPD and other departments tackle our most pressing counter-terrorism challenges smarter, faster, and cheaper.

As a result, it is the recommendation of the CPT that the LAPD partner with an existing school of higher education and our federal partners to create a National Counter Terrorism Academy (NCTA) in Los Angeles. The purpose of the NCTA would be to lead the way in ushering in a new era of policing strategy: Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP). Recognized as a national way forward, ILP is an all-crimes approach to enforcement that will revolutionize law enforcement. ILP richly integrates existing strategies and technologies into a coherent “game-plan” approach in allocating resources

efficiently. Currently, without a national strategy, or a place where police executives can learn how to implement ILP, it is sitting on the shelf unused.

Setting national standards for training in the field of counter-terrorism would be the first step in pursuing a coordinated approach to intelligence gathering and analysis. Currently, unlike intelligence training, information technology systems and first responder training courses must be certified and approved as interoperable. As proposed by the LEAP Strategy report,³ such an effort would be needed to train police officers at every level in a unified, scientific, and constitutionally-responsible manner. The NCTA would both seek out current and professional programs and curriculum and develop its own where gaps exist. By establishing a professional academic approach, the NCTA would be a first of its kind to forward ILP strategies for local police agencies and their partners who are going to be essential in transitioning national and international homeland security efforts into homeland security initiatives.

Public-private partnerships such as that exemplified by the Los Angeles Police Department and the Manhattan Institute build tangible results. For example, we have sought the advice of CPT and other private and public partners in developing our fundamental approach to building good community relations with faith-based groups in our City. I am proud to report that LAPD works extraordinarily hard at developing strong ties with

³ Law Enforcement Assistance and Partnership Strategy - Improving Information Sharing Between the Intelligence Community and State, Local, and Tribal Law Enforcement.

the people of Los Angeles. In building effective relationships with those groups that the current terrorist operative is likely to exploit, we are learning that it is best to concentrate on shared goals such as public safety and quality of life issues. With the trust and mutual respect between police and citizen that such collaboration fosters, we are erecting the strongest of defenses against terrorism.

As with any new educational effort the basics are needed – a brick and mortar facility, and educational infrastructure, computers, networks, and other information technology. A core curriculum aimed at every level of law enforcement, one that is tailored to the students’ needs, must be developed and quickly implemented.

Madam Chairwoman and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to speak today on this important subject. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.