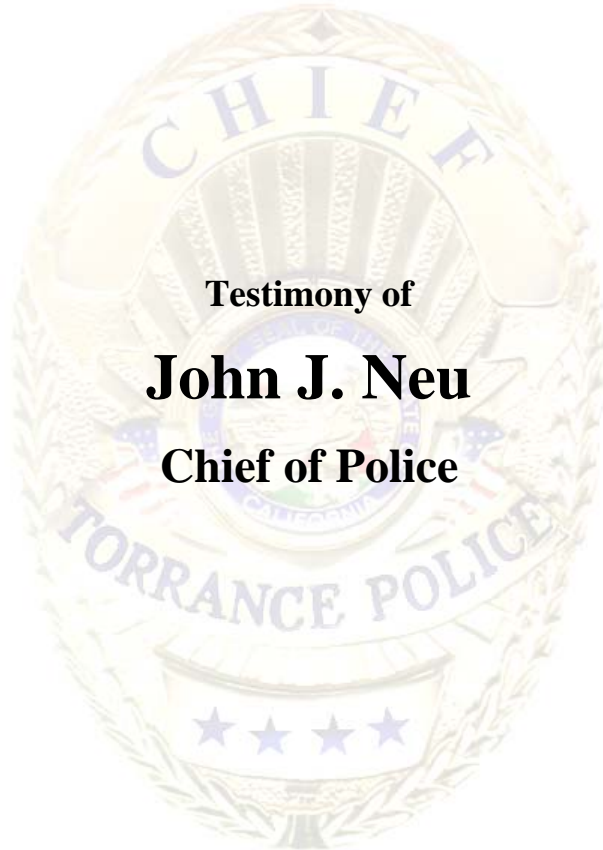


City of Torrance Police Department



Testimony of

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Hearing on Radicalization, Information Sharing and Community Outreach: Protecting the Homeland from Homegrown Terror

United States Congress
House Committee on Homeland Security's Subcommittee on
Intelligence, Information Sharing and Risk Assessment



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City of Torrance Council Chambers
Torrance, California

Hearing on Radicalization, Information Sharing and Community Outreach: Protecting the Homeland from Homegrown Terror

Needless to say, since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the role and responsibility of local law enforcement as first responders to terrorist activity have changed. Our mission demands that we make every effort possible to detect and prevent terrorist activity right here in our own communities. The new paradigm for local law enforcement is prevention, but the awareness, knowledge, skills and abilities of these officers must be enhanced in order to effectively thwart terrorist plots before they manifest as attacks.

The most significant trend that has been identified over the past several years is the rise of the "homegrown" threat, which has been publicized extensively in the media. The possibility of a "homegrown" terrorist attack against Los Angeles, New York, Chicago or any other American city is real and is worsening with time as the radicalization process unfolds. The fuel that ignites this inside threat is a significant challenge for law enforcement agencies across the United States.

In July of 2005, officers from my department arrested two suspects for robbing a local gas station. As the investigation continued to unfold, the officers came face-to-face with a direct act of domestic terrorism. An Islamic extremist group based here in California and known as "Assembly of Authentic Islam" (JIS) was uncovered. This group, operating primarily in state prisons without apparent connections or direction from outside the United States, committed several armed robberies throughout Southern California, including the one in Torrance. The robberies were committed with the goal of financing attacks against the enemies of Islam, including the United States government and supporters of Israel.

The investigation brought charges against Kevin James, Lavar Washington, Gregory Patterson, and Hammad Samana. The indictment alleges that James, while in prison in Sacramento, recruited fellow prison inmates to join JIS and preached the duty of members was to target for violent attack any enemies of Islam, or "infidels," including the United States government and Jewish and non-Jewish supporters of Israel. James allegedly distributed a document in prison that justified the killing of "infidels," and made members take an oath not to talk about the existence of JIS. He also allegedly sought to establish groups or "cells" of JIS members outside of prison to carry out violent attacks against "perceived infidels," including the United States government, the government of Israel and Jewish people.

Washington, also an inmate at the Sacramento prison, joined JIS in November 2004 and was paroled at the end of the month. In December 2004, James allegedly instructed Washington to recruit five people to train in covert operations, acquire firearms with silencers, and find contacts with explosives expertise or learn to make bombs that could be activated from a distance.

The indictment alleges that beginning in December 2004, Washington, Patterson and Samana targeted and conducted Internet research on and surveillance of United States military facilities, which included recruitment centers and military bases in the Los Angeles area, as part of their plot to kill United States military personnel. In July 2005, Patterson and Samana allegedly used computers to research military targets in the Los Angeles area, while Samana drafted a document listing Israeli and United States targets in Los Angeles. In addition to the United States military

targets, the coconspirators specifically targeted Israeli and Jewish facilities in the Los Angeles area, including the Israeli Consulate, El Al (the national airline of Israel) and synagogues. They also allegedly engaged in firearms and physical training in preparation for attacks.

According to the indictment, the defendants purchased weapons or otherwise tried to acquire weapons in furtherance of their terrorist conspiracy, and made efforts to raise money by robbing gas stations. The indictment alleges that eleven times beginning May 30, 2005, the defendants, armed with shotguns, robbed or attempted to rob gas stations in several cities and towns in Southern California, including Los Angeles, Torrance, Playa del Ray, Bellflower, Pico Rivera, Walnut, Orange, Playa Vista and Fullerton. The indictment alleges that during the gas station robbery spree, Patterson updated James on the progress of the planned war of terrorism against the United States government.

The JIS case is a prime example of the powerful radical influence which poses a serious threat from within. Our greatest weapon against terrorism is unity. That unity is built upon information sharing and coordination of law enforcement at every level and the intelligence communities. The JIS case involved approximately 500 law enforcement officers from the federal, state and local levels. It has been described by some in our community as a model case of information sharing and investigation. The Los Angeles Police Department provided over 100 officers to this investigation alone.

The criminal investigation into the alleged terrorist conspiracy was lead by the FBI's Long Beach Joint Terrorism Task Force, whose participating agencies include the Los Angeles Police Department; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Torrance Police Department; the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department; the Long Beach Police Department; the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement; the Los Angeles Port Police; U.S. Customs and Border Protection; the U.S. Coast Guard Investigative Service; the Defense Criminal Investigative Service; and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The JIS case is a prime example of how far local law enforcement has come in our collaborative efforts in fighting domestic terrorism that involved radical homegrown terrorists.

Local law enforcement is, in fact, uniquely positioned to identify terrorist activity right here in our own communities. As displayed in the JIS case, local law enforcement's relationship with federal law enforcement has improved immensely. A major portion of this success is directly related to the training of our line level officers in regards to domestic terrorism. A specific focus on threat identification training paid dividends across the board during the JIS investigation. The vertical sharing of intelligence information, coupled with communication and coordination throughout the investigation, proved to be invaluable to all of the agencies involved.

Information Needs of Local Law Enforcement Relating to Islamic Radicalization

Local law enforcement plays a critical role in the identification and disruption of radicalized Islamic groups. Our personnel are on the streets of our community everyday interacting, observing, and maintaining the public safety. Our Community Based Policing model, Focus Based Policing, has proven to be successful mainly because of our steadfast relationships with

the people we protect. Since the attacks of nine-eleven, local law enforcement has utilized these policing models to address our homeland security needs and specifically the radicalized Islamic extremist threat. We do, however, require better awareness in some critical areas such as:

- Understanding the threat of terrorism to our community and infrastructure
 - Homegrown terror (JIS)
- Cultural awareness of the Muslim community we serve and equal knowledge of the very small percentage of Muslims that would be vulnerable to the radical ideologies
- What factors lead to radicalized beliefs and what are the trip wires or clues in the community that local law enforcement would encounter?
- Where could recruitment and radicalization occur in our community?
- Identification of material support efforts for terror and criminal organizations
- Gaining a better understanding of combating Fourth Generation Warfare
 - Terrorism is a tactic of Fourth Generation Warfare

Our partners in the FBI and the region are facilitating the training and awareness through unprecedented lateral networking.

Our Well Established Relationship with the FBI

Our professional relationship with the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been well established for over twenty years. Our investigators from the Crimes Persons, Narcotics, and Crime Impact Sections of our organization work hand in hand with FBI personnel on very successful regional investigations. Our organizations have synergized and we have gained from each others strengths. We consistently enjoy a seamless commingling of resources, training, and expertise with our FBI partners.

Our participation in the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force was a natural progression of our professional relationship. We, as an organization, recognize the regional challenge to security and we meet the challenge without hesitation. Our investigators are contributors and team players within the task force initiative. The success of the JTTF initiative weighs heavily on local law enforcement participation. We understand our role and are prepared to endure the challenge. We recognize the value of the “Task Force” approach to investigations, and our National Security is paramount in our thoughts during this trying time in our history.

Our FBI partners, the Los Angeles Police Department, the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department, and other law enforcement agencies have embraced this spirit of cooperation. We truly witnessed this selfless commitment during the JIS investigation. This investigation tasked over 500 personnel and the Los Angeles Police Department alone contributed over 100 officers. This

ability to force multiply was critical to the rapid dismantling of this dangerous threat and we are very appreciative to “our big brothers” in the region.

With the creation of the Los Angeles Joint Regional Intelligence Center (LA JRIC), the “fusion” of information sharing has really evolved. The centralized facility has truly encouraged both vertical and, more importantly, lateral information sharing. The initiative has spurred the growth of other Terror Early Warning Groups (TEW) and Terror Liaison Officer working groups within the region. These groups apply proven networking techniques; mentor one another, track crime trends, and train on terror related topics. The LA JRIC also provides terror reporting fusion procedures, predictive analysis relating to crime and terrorism, investigative support and training. All are critical components to enhancing line level officers’ awareness.

Our Community Outreach Efforts

To address our community’s safety, we have followed our successful Focus Based Policing model to reach out to the public and business sectors. We have modified the “focus” to include trip wires for terror related activities. We have identified areas within our jurisdiction such as the Del Amo Fashion Center, our many public and private schools, petrochemical facilities, Exxon Mobil Refinery, and secured our relationships and resources to maximize security efforts. This, too, has been a collaborated effort involving DHS, FBI, and local law enforcement. We are constantly reinforcing our methods and training to equal the threat and maintain the safety our community.

Focus Based Policing for Counterterrorism

- Building ties and relationships with the community
- Understanding socio-cultural, political, and religious issues
- Understanding terrorist indicators and behaviors
- Empowering the community

Engage the Community

- Town hall meeting and outreach programs
- School awareness programs and counter terror trained School Resource Officers
- Business contacts and critical infrastructure monitoring
- Deployment of Terror Liaison Officers

In closing, the Torrance Police Department has experienced “homegrown” terrorism firsthand. Our federal, state, and local partners were invaluable in uncovering and dismantling a very real threat to our region from JIS. Our success in this case was due to a professional, established, aggressive approach to investigating criminal activity, and the established partnership with the FBI Joint Terrorism Task Force. I would like to thank the committee for allowing me to participate in this hearing.

Thank you