

**Testimony of the Hon. Frank Wolf, R-Va.**

**“The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community's Response.”**

**House Committee on Homeland Security**

**March 10, 2011**

*Mr. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to testify this morning on such an important issue. I commend you for your leadership in holding these hearings.*

*I have been concerned about and been following the issue of radical Islamic terrorism for nearly three decades. I visited the Marine barracks in Lebanon following the 1983 bombing that killed 241 American servicemen.*

*I closely followed the issue of terrorism with the first attack on the World Trade Center in 1993 and throughout the 1990s with the deadly attacks against our embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, where yet another of my constituents was killed.*

*As a result, in 1998 I authored legislation creating the National Commission on Terrorism, also known as the Bremer Commission, and highlighted the threat from Osama bin Laden in my introductory remarks -- years before many in our government fully understood the danger he posed. I will submit a [copy of that statement](#) for the record.*

*I was the chairman of the House Appropriations subcommittee that funds the FBI and Justice Department on September 11, 2001, and I worked closely with Director Mueller and his leadership team from 2002-2006 to transform its mission to deal with the terrorist threat.*

*I am now again chairman of that subcommittee and receive regular briefings on terrorism and the new and growing threat posed by domestic radicalization and frequently visit the National Counterterrorism Center, which is located in my district.*

*According to the Congressional Research Service, there have been 43 "homegrown jihadist terrorist plots and attacks since 9/11," including 22 plots or attacks since May 2009.*

*As U.S. government officials, law enforcement and community leaders seek to understand and combat this emerging challenge, we must foster partnerships with peaceful and law-abiding Americans of the Muslim faith and not allow their voices to be drowned out.*

*Mr. Chairman, over the last three decades I have seen firsthand the violence and repression against Muslims in many countries and spoken out in their defense.*

*In Sudan, I led the first congressional delegation to Darfur, where nearly all of the victims of the genocide are Muslim.*

*In Chechnya, I was the only Member of Congress to visit during the fighting in 1995 and I*

*condemned the violence against the largely Muslim population.*

*In Bosnia, I was one of the only Members to visit Muslim men in a Serb-run prisoner-of-war camp where I saw evidence of modern-day ethnic-cleansing and supported lifting the arms embargo so the Muslim population could defend themselves.*

*In Kosovo, I visited five times in the 1990s and I spoke out for the bombing campaign to stop Serbian atrocities against Muslims in Kosovo, and helped the Muslim refugee population as they fled Kosovo and poured into Kukes, Albania.*

*In China, I was one of the first Members to raise concerns about the persecution of Muslims.*

*Further, I was the author of the International Religious Freedom Act, which created the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom as well as the International Religious Freedom Office at the State Department.*

*Central to the act was the assertion that "freedom of religious belief and practice is a universal human right and fundamental freedom."*

*I am also very mindful of the important role that American Muslims play in the United States today. They are teachers, doctors, policemen and soldiers. They are mothers, fathers and neighbors. They are patriotic Americans.*

*They have taken advantage of the opportunity this country provides for people of every background -- and some have paid the ultimate price to protect our freedoms in service to their country.*

*I am reminded of a young Pakistani American that I had the privilege of meeting during one of my visits to Walter Reed Hospital in recent years. He was in the midst of his physical therapy -- therapy that was necessary because he had lost both of his legs while in combat in Iraq.*

*He was a patriot who makes us proud -- and he was Muslim.*

*In my oversight of the Justice Department, including both its civil rights and national security programs, I am always mindful of the government's responsibility to safeguard the rights of all Americans.*

*My grandparents immigrated to America from Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even though my grandparents were both native German speakers, when World War I broke out my grandmother decided that from that day forward only English would be spoken in their home.*

*I share this bit of personal history to illustrate that I am cognizant of the challenges facing new immigrants, especially during times of war. My German family was sensitive about how some people may have viewed them, so we who are not Muslim have to be understanding of feelings of sensitivity in the Muslim community today.*

*There have been instances in our nation's history, especially when our country has been under attack, where the civil liberties of certain groups of people have been violated because other people were afraid. This is inexcusable.*

*But this is the exception, not the rule.*

*Our experiment in self-governance has been marked by an unwavering commitment to basic freedoms for all people, among them the right to worship according to the dictates of one's conscience. Many American Muslims left countries where such freedom is unimaginable.*

*Yet we cannot ignore the phenomenon of domestic radicalization. It is a national security challenge that must be confronted.*

*According to a recent report by respected counterterrorism experts Bruce Hoffman and Peter Bergen called *Assessing the Terrorist Threat*:*

*"The American 'melting pot' has not provided a firewall against the radicalization and recruitment of American citizens and residents, though it has arguably lulled us into a sense of complacency that homegrown terrorism couldn't happen in the United States... By not taking more urgently and seriously the radicalization and recruitment that was actually occurring in the U.S., authorities failed to comprehend that this was not an isolated phenomenon... Rather, it indicated the possibility that even an embryonic terrorist radicalization and recruitment infrastructure had been established in the U.S. homeland."*

*For generation upon generation, people of all cultures, races and religions have immigrated to the United States to build a better life for their families.*

*In doing so, some of the newest Americans became our strongest patriots -- espousing and renewing our most cherished American values. However, as Hoffman and Bergen note, the "melting pot" model has been insufficient in recent years to combat radicalization and recruitment trends among our own citizens. This has been true even in my own state.*

*Consider the following individuals who have been radicalized in northern Virginia alone over the last several years:*

- *In October 2010, Farooque Ahmed from Ashburn, Virginia, was arrested for allegedly plotting attacks on the Washington Metro system -- targeting Metro stations to find optimal times to kill as many innocent people as possible.*
- *In July 2010, Zachary Chesser, graduate of nearby Oakton High School, was arrested in New York en route to join al Shabaab in Somalia. Late last year, Chesser plead guilty to charges of providing material support to terrorists, communicating threats and soliciting crimes of violence and was sentenced to 30 years in prison.*

- *In November 2009, five American Muslim teenagers from Fairfax County, Virginia, were arrested in Pakistan attempting to join militant Islamist organizations. They have been sentenced to 10 years in a Pakistan prison.*
- *In November 2009, Virginia native Army Major Nidal Hassan attacked Fort Hood in Texas and has been charged with the shooting deaths of 13 servicemen and women and civilians. Hassan was a graduate of Virginia Tech and grew up in Arlington and Roanoke, Virginia.*
- *In 2004, Abdul Rahman Al-Amoudi from Falls Church, Virginia was convicted on three charges of terrorist financing and conspiring to assassinate Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah and was sentenced to 23 years in jail.*
- *In 2003, Ahmed Omar Abu Ali -- northern Virginia resident and the Islamic Saudi Academy's 1999 valedictorian -- was arrested in Saudi Arabia, and was later convicted in Federal District Court in Alexandria of conspiracy to commit terrorism, including a plot to assassinate President Bush. He was sentenced to life in prison.*

*There are many more examples from around the country. I will submit for the record [a full list provided by the Congressional Research Service of terrorist attacks](#) committed by radicalized Muslim Americans.*

*One also cannot overlook the prominent role that Anwar Aulaqi played in northern Virginia during his time preaching at a mosque in Falls Church -- just a few miles from Capitol Hill.*

*This is particularly noteworthy given Aulaqi's emergence as a leader of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula and his recruitment of the Fort Hood shooter, the Christmas Day bomber, and the Times Square bomber.*

*Aulaqi has emerged as a driving force in the recruitment of would-be terrorists living in the U.S. and Europe.*

*Last year, Aulaqi publicly praised these alleged terrorists and called for further attacks against American civilians -- and Aulaqi is an American citizen.*

*It is somewhat unclear by what means these domestic extremists are being radicalized. Some experts say that the Internet is the conduit through which radical voices, like Aulaqi, corrupt minds. Other experts say it's the importation of radical Wahabiism.*

*However, as we deal with this growing threat, it is troubling to see a group such as the Council on American-Islamic Relations, commonly known as CAIR, attempt to stifle debate and even obstruct cooperation and communication with law enforcement officials.*

*On June 12, 2009, I spoke on the House floor for nearly an hour laying out in great detail my concern about CAIR. In my remarks I explored the Holy Land Foundation case.*

*One agency that comes before my subcommittee is the FBI, which was intimately involved in a lengthy investigation culminating in the Holy Land Foundation and five of its former organizers, being convicted in November 2008 on charges, and I quote a Department of Justice press release, "of providing material support to Hamas, a designated foreign terrorist organization." [End Quote]*

*Hamas is recognized by the United States and the European Union as a terrorist organization. It is publicly committed to the destruction of Israel. Its 1988 covenant says, "The Day of Judgment will not come about until Moslems fight Jews and kill them."*

*Among the unindicted co-conspirators in the Holy Land Foundation case was CAIR, which over the last several years has been granted access to the highest levels of the U.S. government. The organization is routinely, and I believe mistakenly, elevated in the press as the voice of mainstream American Muslims.*

*Last week during a hearing before my subcommittee, Attorney General Eric Holder recognized CAIR's "troubled history" and FBI Director Robert Mueller has suspended all non-investigative cooperation with CAIR.*

*In an April 28, 2009, [letter to Senator Jon Kyl](#), which I submit for the Record, the FBI reported that during the Holy Land Foundation trial, "evidence was introduced that demonstrated a relationship among CAIR, individual CAIR founders (including its current President Emeritus and its Executive Director) and the Palestinian Committee. Evidence was also introduced that demonstrated a relationship between the Palestinian Committee and Hamas...In light of that evidence, the FBI suspended all formal contacts between CAIR and the FBI."*

*Several other elected officials have raised concerns about CAIR, among them Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Richard Durbin and Senator Barbara Boxer.*

*My concern about CAIR is not limited to its disturbing origins and connections to terrorist financing. I am equally concerned about CAIR's role in attacking and seeking to destroy the reputations of any who dare to raise issues of concern about domestic radicalization. This should give us pause.*

*In a May 25, 2007, Wall Street Journal op-ed, Tawik Hamid wrote, "In America, perhaps the most conspicuous organization to persistently accuse opponents of Islamophobia is the Council on American Islamic Relations."*

*This is particularly interesting coming from Hamid, an Islamic reformer and one-time Islamic extremist from Egypt, who was a member of the terrorist Islamic organization Jemaah Islamiya with Dr. Aiman Al-Zawaherri, who later became the second in command of al-Qaeda.*

*Additionally, in October 2008, the editorial page editor of the The Columbus Dispatch spoke to CAIR's bent toward accusation as a means of muzzling debate:*

*"For many years, CAIR has waged a campaign to intimidate and silence anyone who raises alarms about the dangers of Islamic extremism. CAIR's rationale is that discussions of Islamic extremism lead to animosity not just toward those who twist Islam into a justification for terrorism but toward all who practice Islam. CAIR's concern is understandable, but its response is unreasonable. The group acts properly when it hammers home the point that only a small number of Muslims support religiously motivated violence and that targeting law-abiding Muslims is wrong. Where CAIR errs is in labeling anyone who discusses Islamic terrorism a bigot and hater, an Islamophobe, to use CAIR's favorite slur."*

*However, discourse is not all that CAIR seeks to silence. In many cases, its national and state chapter leaders actively dissuade American Muslims from cooperating with federal law enforcement.*

*For example, after dozens of Somali Americans disappeared from the Minneapolis area in 2009, CAIR attempted to drive a wedge between the Muslim community and the FBI, which was attempting to track down the missing men.*

*According to official estimates, at least two dozen Americans have moved to Somalia in recent years to join the transnational terrorist group al Shabaab.*

*Approximately 10 of these men have been killed in fighting or acts of terrorism.*

*Fearing for members of their community, Somali Americans in Minneapolis repelled CAIR's efforts and held a public protest in June 2009 to speak out about CAIR's activities. I enclose a [Minneapolis Star Tribune article](#) for the Record.*

*In January 2011, CAIR's California chapter found an old poster and displayed it on its Web site stating, "Build a wall of resistance. Don't talk to the FBI." I brought an enlarged copy of this poster with me today.*

*This is a telling example of how CAIR has sought to prevent individuals from cooperating with law enforcement -- or at the very least to present themselves as the only legitimate channel for doing so.*

*Although CAIR removed the poster once the media started reporting on it, it reflects a larger troubling pattern.*

*When the terrorism commission legislation was moving in 1998, in CAIR's own words, they "asked Muslims to contact leaders of a House-Senate conference committee and urge them to amend or eliminate new legislation that would create a National Commission on Terrorism."*

*This was a misguided lobbying effort at best. Fortunately, it was unsuccessful and the bipartisan commission was authorized to conduct its work.*

*A Congressional Research Service report described the main finding of the commission this way: "It calls on the U.S. government to prepare more actively to prevent and deal with a future mass*

*casualty, catastrophic terrorist attack." Regrettably, the commission's recommendations, sent to Congress in June 2000, were generally ignored until after the attacks on 9/11, when 3,000 people were killed, including more than two dozen from my congressional district.*

*Let me be clear: CAIR is counter-productive and is hurting the American Muslim community.*

*I raise these concerns because I believe that if we are to successfully counter domestic radicalization, law enforcement in particular will need the active engagement of Muslim communities. Dr. Hedieh Mirahmadi, president and founder of WORDE and co-chair of the first ever all female Islamic Law Council, recently wrote in the Christian Science Monitor, "At the end of the day, we need to address the core problem of radicalization in America's backyard. The importance of creating lasting partnerships with moderate Muslim communities cannot be overemphasized."*

*Mr. Chairman, I have a recommendation to address the challenge of domestic radicalization head on. I believe that we must take a fresh look at how we can thwart domestic radicalization - - because it is clear that current efforts have been unsuccessful.*

*I want to commend the FBI and Director Mueller for their exceptional work in intercepting would-be terrorists before their attacks. They work tirelessly to protect our country and their record over the last decade speaks for itself. But despite the FBI's success at disrupting plots under way, the U.S. does not have an effective or coherent policy to defeat radicalization.*

*That is why I will be introducing legislation soon that would create a "Team B" to bring fresh eyes to U.S. domestic radicalization and counterterrorism strategy. The team would represent a new approach, which focuses not just on connecting the dots of intelligence, but to rethink the nature of threats to stay a step ahead in understanding how to break the radicalization and recruitment cycle that sustains terrorism, how to disrupt the global terrorist network and how to strategically isolate it.*

*During the Ford Administration, then-CIA director George H.W. Bush created a "Team B" composed of outside experts to reexamine intelligence relating to Soviet capabilities. Their conclusions were markedly different than those reached by agency officials. Many of their assessments were used in the Reagan Administration to deal with the Soviets -- ultimately leading to the end of the Cold War.*

*Today, our intelligence community and federal law enforcement are so inundated with reports and investigations that they do not have the time or capacity to step back and strategically reevaluate the threat before us.*

*I believe a "Team B" would provide a tremendous service to both the agencies and the Congress in making recommendations on how we can disrupt domestic radicalization.*

*For more than a year, I have written numerous letters to the president and members of his national security team urging them to implement this proposal. They have not.*

*As Bruce Hoffman wrote, "One important yet currently languishing congressional initiative that would help counter this strategy is Representative Frank Wolf's proposal to institutionalize a 'red team' or 'Team B' counterterrorist capability as an essential element of our efforts to combat terrorism and in the war against al-Qaeda.*

*I believe this would be a constructive step and I urge your support of this legislation. I was working closely with former Congressman Jane Harman on this proposal before she left the House to lead the Woodrow Wilson Center.*

*Mr. Chairman, I want to thank you again for the opportunity to testify this morning. I strongly believe that your hearings will provide the Congress with a starting point for a new dialogue about fighting extremism and radicalization.*

*We cannot afford to be silent. I am reminded of the song by Simon and Garfunkel, "The Boxer," which includes the lyric: "Man hears what he wants to hear, but disregards the rest."*

*We cannot disregard the issue of radicalization in our country.*

*Your hearings can provide a productive forum for a much-needed dialogue about domestic radicalization. Thank you for your leadership.*