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# Statement of Secretary Janet Napolitano before the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, "Nine Years After 9/11: Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland"

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(Statement for the Record)

Chairman Lieberman, Senator Collins, and members of the Committee: Thank you for this opportunity to testify on the continuing and evolving terrorist threat to the United States.

Today I would like to highlight the main ways in which the terrorist threat to our country is changing - ways that increasingly challenge law enforcement and the intelligence community. I would also like to highlight some specific - though not exhaustive - ways that the Department of Homeland Security is moving to address this evolving threat.

## The Evolving Terrorist Threat to the Homeland

The terrorist threat changes quickly, and we have observed important changes in the threat even since this Committee convened a similar hearing last year. The threat is evolving in several ways that make it more difficult for law enforcement or the intelligence community to detect and disrupt plots.

One overarching theme of this evolution is the diversification of the terrorist threat on many levels. These include the sources of the threat, the methods that terrorists use, and the targets that they seek to attack.

### Sources of the threat

It is clear that the threat of al Qaeda-style terrorism is not limited to the al-Qaeda core group, or organizations that have close operational links to al Qaeda. While al Qaeda continues to threaten America directly, it also inspires its affiliates and other groups and individuals who share its violent ideology and seek to attack the United States claiming it is in the name of Islam - a claim that is widely rejected.

Some of these affiliates, like al-Shabaab in Somalia, have not yet attempted to attack the homeland, though al-Shabaab has committed acts of terrorism elsewhere and some al-Shabaab leaders have espoused violent, anti-American beliefs. Other al-Qaeda affiliates have actually attempted to attack the homeland in recent months. These include Tehrik-e Taliban (TTP) and al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) - which, until their respective claims of responsibility for the attempted Times Square and Christmas Day terrorist attacks, had only conducted attacks in their regions.

Homegrown terrorists represent a new and changing facet of the terrorist threat. To be clear, by "homegrown," I mean terrorist operatives who are U.S. persons and who were radicalized in the United States and learned terrorist tactics either here or in training camps in places such as the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan. Terrorist organizations are increasingly seeking operatives who are familiar with the United States or the West. In their roles as terrorist planners, operational facilitators, and operatives, these individuals improve the terrorist groups' knowledge of Western and American culture and security practices, which can increase the likelihood that an attempted attack could be successful. In recent attacks, we have also seen the influence of violent extremist messages and propaganda spread by U.S.-born, English-speaking individuals operating from abroad, including the U.S.-born, Yemen-based Anwar al-Awlaki.<sup>1</sup> Skillfully contrived publications, persuasive messages in idiomatic English, and skillful use of the Internet may be helping to increase the number of homegrown violent extremists.

### **Diversified tactics**

Terrorist tactics continue to evolve and diversify. Recent attempted terrorist attacks have proceeded quickly, with less extensive pre-operational planning than previous attempts and with fewer linkages to international terrorist organizations. They have been executed on a smaller scale than the catastrophic attacks of 9/11.

There is a rising threat from attacks that use improvised explosives devices (IEDs), other explosives, and small arms. This type of attack has been common in hotspots around the world for some time, but we have now experienced such attempted attacks in the United States. Other countries, from Afghanistan to Somalia to Russia, have also experienced attacks where small teams of operatives storm a facility using small arms. Unlike large-scale, coordinated, catastrophic attacks, executing smaller-scale attacks requires less planning and fewer preoperational steps. Accordingly, there are fewer opportunities to detect such an attack before it occurs.

### **Potential targets**

Last, let me address targets. We must recognize that virtually anything is a potential target. Consequently, our thinking needs to be "outside the box" while we simultaneously focus our planning on targets that intelligence forecasts to be most at risk. Many of the targets that terrorists seek to strike are familiar - especially commercial aviation, which continues to be a favored target. Most public places and critical infrastructure face some risk of attack in today's environment. Potential targets include mass transit and passenger rail, which serve thousands of people every day, operate on predictable schedules, and have many access points, all of which are appealing characteristics to terrorists. We also see a threat to the kinds of places that are easily accessible to the public. Among these kinds of targets, hotels were notably attacked during the Mumbai terrorist attacks of 2008. There also continues to be a general risk to our critical infrastructure such as ports and chemical facilities.

The increasing number of terrorism sources, terrorist tactics, and terrorist targets make it more difficult for law enforcement or the intelligence community to detect and disrupt plots. The threats come from a broader array of groups and regions. It comes from a wider variety of harder-to-detect tactics. And it is aimed at harder-to-secure places than before.

DHS is moving swiftly to address the current threat landscape. Through the state and major urban area fusion centers, we have been working closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement in our overall efforts to combat terrorism, because in an environment where operatives may not have close links to international terrorist organizations - and where they may, in fact, be based within this country - these levels of law enforcement may be the first to notice something suspicious. We have established programs that facilitate a strong, two-way flow of threat-related information, where SLTT officials communicate possible threat information to federal officials, and vice-versa. As discussed earlier, pre-operational activity - such as target selection, reconnaissance, and dry runs - may occur over a very short time period, or in open and crowded places. Informing federal authorities of suspicious activities allows this information to be compared with information in other law enforcement and intelligence databases and to be analyzed for trends, increasing the likelihood that an attack can be thwarted. This also allows federal authorities to better inform communities of the threats they face. The nation's fusion centers have been a hub of these efforts, combined with other initiatives DHS has instituted to better partner with SLTT law enforcement. Today I will focus on a few of these actions.

## **Providing Law Enforcement Personnel the Information and Resources They Need**

### **Information sharing**

In today's threat environment, preventing terrorist attacks means creating a unified effort across all levels of government, and ensuring that law enforcement officers on the front lines at all levels have everything necessary to do their jobs.

We are strengthening the networks and relationships necessary to get information where it should be, when it should be there, and in the most useful format. At the heart of this effort are fusion centers, which serve as focal points for information sharing among federal and SLTT law enforcement. Starting with just a handful in 2006, there are 72 fusion centers today. They analyze information and identify trends in order to effectively share timely intelligence with local law enforcement and DHS. In turn, DHS shares this information with others within the Intelligence Community. By doing this, the Department facilitates two-way communication among our federal partners and state and local emergency management and public safety personnel, including the first responders on the ground.

My goal is to make every fusion center a center of analytic excellence that provides useful, actionable information about threats to SLTT law enforcement and first responders. To support

this vision, we have deployed experienced DHS intelligence officers to fusion centers across the country. We have provided 64 personnel at last count and are committed to having an officer in each fusion center. We support fusion centers in our grants process and are looking for ways to support them through adding technology and personnel, including the deployment of highly trained experts in critical infrastructure protection. As fusion centers become fully operational, we deploy the Homeland Security Data Network so that fusion center personnel with appropriate federal security clearances have access to classified homeland security threat information.

Strengthening fusion centers is not the only way we are improving the flow and quality of information and getting it to where it needs to be. We are also working closely with the Department of Justice to expand the Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative into a national resource for SLTT law enforcement. As I mentioned earlier, today's diffuse threat landscape means that a police officer on the beat, rather than an intelligence analyst in Washington, D.C., may have the best opportunity to detect an attack or attack planning. The SAR Initiative creates a standard process for law enforcement in more than two dozen states and cities to identify and report suspicious incidents or behaviors associated with specific threats or terrorism. It makes first responders first preventers, as well. The system allows the information to be shared nationally so that it can be used to identify broader trends. We are working with our partners at DOJ to expand this program to every state to make it as comprehensive and effective as possible. By next month, the system will be implemented in an additional 17 locations in addition to the 12 operational, and will cover nearly 70 percent of the American population. We plan for it to be fully implemented on a national scale by the end of 2011.

### Grants and grand guidance

Another important way we push tools and resources from Washington and into local hands is through grants. Currently, state and local governments across America are struggling to pay their bills and fund vital services. As a former two-term Governor, I know the hard budgetary choices they are facing. But it is critical to our national security that local communities maintain and continue to strengthen their public safety capabilities. To help ease the burden on state and local governments, we awarded \$3.8 billion in grants this past year to states, cities, law enforcement, and first responders, and are helping localities stretch these dollars even further. We have eliminated red tape by streamlining the grant process. We have expanded grants to fund maintenance and sustainability, enabling local jurisdictions to support previous investments, rather than buying new equipment or technology each year. We have also bolstered first responders across the country by making it easier for fire grants to be put to work quickly and to enable fire departments to rehire laid-off firefighters and protect the jobs of veteran firefighters. Keeping experienced first responders on the job is critical to our ability to recognize threats and take action.

### Public awareness

As recent events have underscored, each and every person has a role to play in keeping our communities and country safe. For example, take the New York street vendor who tipped off a policeman about the bombing attempt in Times Square, or the group of passengers on Flight 253 who intervened to stop the bombing attempt on Christmas Day.

That is why we have taken an effective public awareness campaign with a familiar slogan - "If You See Something, Say Something" - developed by New York City's Metropolitan Transit Authority with support from DHS, and are expanding it across the country, throughout various sectors. Over the summer, we launched this campaign in partnership with Amtrak, the general aviation community, and local and regional law enforcement in the National Capital Region and across the Southern states. We are also working with professional and collegiate sports leagues to launch this effort at stadiums across the country this fall.

The goal of the "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign is to raise awareness of potential indicators of terrorism, crime and other threats and emphasize the importance of reporting suspicious activity to law enforcement. We see this as a way both to empower Americans to take part in our nation's security and to build important relationships between citizens and SLTT law enforcement in order to ensure local authorities have the information they need to stop terrorist attacks.

### Empowering Communities and Police to Combat Violence

We also are empowering local jurisdictions and communities to work together to address violent extremism. The potential threat of homegrown violent extremism is very clear. Some two dozen Americans have been arrested on terror charges since 2009. While it is not clear if this represents an actual increase in violent radicalization, versus a rise in the mobilization of previously radicalized individuals, it is nonetheless evident that over the past 12 months, efforts by violent extremist groups and movements to communicate with and recruit individuals within the United States have intensified. And the profiles of Americans who have been

arrested on terror charges, or who we know are involved in terrorism overseas, indicate that there is no "typical" profile of a homegrown terrorist. While we work to address violent extremism, we must acknowledge that there is much we do not know about how individuals come to adopt violent extremist beliefs.

All of this was noted in a detailed report by the Bipartisan Policy Center's National Security Preparedness Group co-chaired by Lee Hamilton and Tom Kean. It is important to emphasize, though, the actions are currently underway to address the threat of homegrown violent extremism, including our regular consultations with international partners. We know that information-driven, community-oriented approaches led by local police departments in close partnership with community members have been very successful in reducing violence in many American communities. The Homeland Security Advisory Council's (HSAC) Countering Violent Extremism Working Group - comprised of security experts, elected officials, law enforcement leaders, community leaders, and first responders from around the country - has provided DHS with a number of recommendations on how to support local law enforcement and community-based efforts to identify and combat sources of violent extremism.

Based on the HSAC Working Group's recommendations, and in conjunction with the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Department of Justice, the Counter Terrorism Academy, and the Naval Postgraduate School, we are developing a curriculum for state and local law enforcement focused on community-oriented policing, to enable frontline personnel to identify activities that are indicators of criminal activity and violence. This training will be available through a number of venues, including regional community policing institutes and DHS' Federal Law Enforcement Training Center.

We are producing a series of unclassified case studies that examine recent incidents involving terrorism. These will inform state and local law enforcement personnel, as well as members of communities, about common behaviors and indicators exhibited by the suspects in these cases. DHS is also creating a series of intelligence products for the fusion centers and law enforcement personnel that will discuss tactics, techniques and plans of terrorist organizations, including the recruitment and training of individuals living in the United States.

In addition, DHS is convening a series of regional summits with state and local law enforcement, government, and community leaders this fall to focus on best practices. These summits will allow all participants to provide and receive feedback on successful community-oriented policing and other programs aimed at preventing violence and crime. DHS will gather these case studies and best practices and share them with law enforcement nationwide, employing the widely used platforms that the Department has already established.

Finally, DHS continues to work with the Department of Justice to leverage grant programs to support training and technical assistance for SLTT law enforcement. The Department is working to incorporate community-oriented policing concepts into our broader preparedness efforts. And at the same time - because these new initiatives and policies are inherently relevant to DHS' local community partnerships - the Department is expanding the cultural training and engagement activities performed by the Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. These activities will help both DHS personnel and SLTT law enforcement to better understand, identify, and mitigate threats to American communities.

Community leaders play a vital role in countering violent extremism. Many have helped disrupt plots and have spoken out against violent extremism. They play a central role in addressing this issue, and we are committed to continuing to work closely with them.

## **Strengthening Specific Sectors**

All of what I have described today helps to create a strong foundation for preventing acts of terrorism. But I would also like to talk about some steps we have taken to address terrorist threats to specific economic sectors. These are hardly the only sectors we are focused upon, but there are a few I would like to highlight for the purpose of this testimony.

### **Commercial aviation**

Despite many improvements to aviation security since 9/11 that have made flying very safe, there are still vulnerabilities that need to be addressed. The attempted terrorist attack on Northwest Flight 253, bound to Detroit, on December 25, 2009, illustrated the global nature of the threat to aviation. That incident involved a U.S. plane flying into a U.S. city, but it endangered individuals from at least 17 foreign countries. The alleged attacker, Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, is a Nigerian citizen educated in the United Kingdom. He received training in terrorist tactics in Yemen, purchased his ticket in Ghana, and flew from Nigeria to Amsterdam before departing for Detroit. And as Canadian officials have pointed out, the plane was over Canadian airspace at the time of the incident.

After this attempted terrorist attack, the U.S. government moved quickly to do more to strengthen security. We took immediate steps to bolster passenger screening, while

addressing larger systemic issues on a global scale. I personally traveled to numerous foreign capitals in the aftermath of the attack to work with our allies to ensure our international aviation security efforts were stronger, better coordinated, and redesigned to meet the current threat environment. Since January, we have worked closely with the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the United Nations body responsible for air transport, on five regional aviation security summits that I have participated in along with elected leaders, security ministers, and airline officials. We have also worked closely with U.S. and international airline and airport trade associations and airline CEOs on a coordinated, international approach to enhancing aviation security.

Next week, at the ICAO General Assembly meeting, we expect the international community to ratify four key elements of global aviation security. These elements are: developing and deploying new security technologies that better detect dangerous materials; strengthening security measures and standards for airport inspections and cargo screening; enhancing information sharing about threats between countries within the international aviation system; and coordinating international technical assistance for the deployment of improved technologies. These reforms represent a historic advancement for the safety and security of air travel.

DHS has coupled these international efforts with significant advances in domestic aviation security. We have deployed additional behavior detection officers, air marshals, and explosives-detection canine teams, among other measures, to airports across the country. Through the President's fiscal year 2011 budget request and the Recovery Act, we accelerated the purchase of 1,000 Advanced Imaging Technology machines for deployment to airports around the country, and are purchasing and deploying more portable explosive detection machines, Advanced Technology x-ray systems, and bottled liquid scanners. The United States implemented new, enhanced security measures for all air carriers with international flights to the United States that use real-time, threat-based intelligence to better mitigate the evolving terrorist threats. In June, DHS achieved a major aviation security milestone called for in the *9/11 Commission Report* by assuming responsibility for terrorist watchlist screening of all passengers on domestic and international flights on U.S. airlines.

### Surface transportation

I would also like to discuss specific actions we have taken to strengthen security for surface transportation, such as passenger rail and mass transit. Many of the steps I have already described are especially important in that environment. We conducted the initial launch of the national "If You See Something, Say Something" campaign at Penn Station in New York, in conjunction with Amtrak. The SAR Initiative is also geared toward detecting signs of terrorism in public places like train stations, buses, or rail cars. This initiative includes the Amtrak Police Department as a law enforcement partner and allows Amtrak officers to use the upgraded reporting system to refer suspicious activity reports to DHS and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. This is in addition to the intelligence sharing that the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) conducts with Amtrak on an ongoing basis, and the information-sharing work done by the Public Transportation Information Sharing Analysis Center. The expansion of the SAR Initiative will continue to work directly to secure rail transportation.

There are also a number of operational activities underway focused on surface transportation. We are continuing to augment local anti-terrorism efforts by deploying TSA officers at train stations to screen passengers with Amtrak police, and in New York subway stations to work alongside New York and MTA Police. TSA special operation teams, known as VIPR teams, work with local partners to support several thousand operations every year. We are moving forward on risk-based implementation plans for each of the 20 recommendations (of which DHS has the lead on 19) made in the Surface Transportation Security Assessment, released in April as part of an Administration-wide effort to address surface transportation security. We are also in the rulemaking process to require background checks and security training for public transit employees, and to require vulnerability assessments and security plans for high-risk public transportation agencies, railroads, and bus operators. All of these will help to address a landscape where the threats to these systems are distinct.

### Conclusion

The terrorist threat against the United States continues to evolve in ways that present more complicated and dangerous challenges than we have faced in the past. We cannot guarantee that there will never be another terrorist attack, and we cannot seal our country under a glass dome. But we can do everything in our power to prevent attacks, confront the terrorist threat head-on, and secure our country.

The efforts that I have described today are only a small part of the work that the hundreds of thousands of men and women, at DHS and at law enforcement agencies across the country, do every day to secure our nation. And I want to emphasize that the Department is focused on many other threats, as well - in particular, the growing threat to our cyber networks and the threat from chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons. In everything I have

described today - and in everything we do to combat terrorism - DHS is focused on providing those on the front lines with the technology, training, and information they need to do their jobs and keep our country safe.

Chairman Lieberman, Senator Collins, and members of the Committee: Thank you for inviting me to testify today. I can now answer any questions you may have.

<sup>1</sup>In addition to this role, Al-Awlaki has also taken on an operational role in attack planning.

*This page was last reviewed/modified on September 22, 2010.*

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