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**Robert S. Mueller, III**  
**Director**  
**Federal Bureau of Investigation**

**Council on Foreign Relations**  
**Washington, D.C.**

**February 23, 2009**

Good afternoon. I am honored to be here today.

Nearly three months ago, several men in a rubber raft landed on the shores of a bustling financial capital as the sun began to set. They scattered in different directions, carrying backpacks with automatic weapons, hand grenades, and satellite phones.

Within just a few hours, innocent civilians were lying in the street, buildings were burning, hostages feared for their lives, and a city was under siege.

News of the attack quickly circled the globe, from traditional media coverage to streaming video, blogs, text messages, and even twitters. The attackers used that same technology, not only to monitor the movements of police and rescue teams and to evade capture, but to communicate with their leaders, who were some distance away.

It was an attack both highly coordinated and deceptively simple in its execution. Of course, I am speaking about Mumbai, in which terrorists killed more than 170 individuals and wounded more than 300.

This type of attack reminds us that terrorists with large agendas and little money can use rudimentary weapons to maximize their impact.

And it again raises the question of whether a similar attack could happen in Seattle or San Diego, Miami or Manhattan.

### **Globalization and Evolution of the Terrorist Threat**

The world in which we live has changed markedly in recent years, from the integration of global markets and the ease of international travel to the rise and the reach of the Internet. But our perception of the world—and our place in it—also has changed.

Last year, scientists captured the first pictures of what they believe to be faraway planets circling stars outside of our solar system. Astronomers have identified more than 300 of these so-called “extrasolar” planets in the past 13 years.

These modern-day explorers seek to confirm what they believe to be out there—to see what has not yet been seen.

These discoveries make our world seem at once smaller and yet infinitely more vast. And they leave us with the feeling that there is much more out there to be found.

From a law enforcement and intelligence perspective, there is always more to be found. But we are not quite so optimistic about what we will discover—new threats, new technologies, and new targets.

The universe of crime and terrorism stretches out infinitely before us, and we, too, are working to find what we believe to be out there, but cannot always see.

In the aftermath of September 11th, our world view was somewhat limited. We were primarily concerned with al Qaeda's leadership and its structure.

Today, we still face threats from al Qaeda. But we must also focus on less well-known terrorist groups, as well as homegrown terrorists. And we must consider extremists from visa-waiver countries, who are merely an e-ticket away from the United States.

Our primary threat continues to come from the tribal areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. But we are seeing persistent activity elsewhere, from the Maghreb and the Sahel to Yemen.

We are increasingly concerned with pockets of people around the world that identify with al Qaeda and its ideology. Some may have little or no actual contact with al Qaeda.

Yet fringe organizations can quickly gain broader aspirations and appeal. And should they connect with the core of al Qaeda, from training to the planning and execution of attacks, the game becomes radically different.

In each of the plots we have disrupted since September 11th, some have asked whether the individuals in question had the intent and the capability to carry out their plans.

There will always be a tension between acting early to disrupt a plot in its planning stages, and continuing to investigate until we are certain that the individuals in question are poised to attack. And in each case, that calibration will be different.

Take the planned attack against Fort Dix, for example. The men we convicted had engaged in target practice in the woods of Pennsylvania. They had watched al Qaeda training videos. They had a map of the base and a plan to get in. And they had purchased semi-automatic weapons from an FBI sting operation.

Like the Mumbai attackers, these men wanted to inflict as much damage as they could. And as the Mumbai attacks illustrate, the simplest of weapons can be quite deadly when combined with capability and intent.

We must also recognize that events outside of our control may impact our national security. World politics often shape terrorist and criminal threats against the United States.

Those same politics can alter the perception of the United States in the eyes of the international community. And what of civil unrest, resource scarcity, and a shifting global economy?

A crisis in the Horn of Africa may well have a ripple effect in Minneapolis, as we shall discuss in a moment. The fall of Communism opened the door to a virtual army of cyber thieves. The integration of cultures around the world has facilitated state-sponsored espionage, a thriving child pornography market, as well as heightened gang activity.

### **Addressing the Threat**

Admittedly, this overview sounds rather dire. And it underscores the need for first-rate intelligence and strong international partnerships.

Hockey great Wayne Gretzky was once asked how he consistently managed to be at the right place on the ice at the right time. He said that while some players skate to where the puck has been, he skates to where the puck will be.

The same is true for those of us in the FBI. We need to know where the threat is moving, and we need to get there first.

The tools upon which we built our reputation as a law enforcement organization—the development of sources, surveillance, communication intercepts, and forensic analysis—are the same tools necessary for a security service.

Our challenge comes in developing the intelligence to disrupt an attack before the fact.

To be effective, we must deliberately collect intelligence to fill gaps between our cases, and gaps in our knowledge base. And that intelligence gathering will differ from city to city, and state to state, just as criminal and terrorist threats differ.

We must also determine if threats around the world translate to potential threats here at home. If there is a suicide bombing in Somalia, are we

at greater risk? Do we understand the full extent of that threat?

We must weigh the value of an early prosecution of select individuals against the benefit of collecting the intelligence necessary to dismantle the entire network.

As Jonathan Evans, Director of MI-5, has said, "Knowing of somebody is not the same as knowing all about them." And he is right.

In every case where an individual poses a threat, we must ask key questions: Where has this individual been? Who are his associates, and where are they now? What are they doing, and who are they talking to?

This targeted intelligence-gathering takes time. It requires patience, precision, and dedication. And it requires a unity of effort, here at home and overseas.

Intelligence enables us to see the unseen, to discover new threats on the horizon. Yet even the best intelligence will not provide complete certainty, given the nature and number of the threats we face.

The question remains: How do we protect ourselves from threats that emanate from overseas? We cannot close our borders or cut off the Internet. We must start at the source.

The day before the attacks in Mumbai, Special Agent Steve Merrill—a Legal Attaché in the FBI's New Delhi office—was enjoying his first day off in nearly a month. He was on his way to Jodhpur, India to play cricket on the U.S. Embassy Team in the Maharajah's annual tournament.

For the record, you do not need to know how to play cricket to work in the FBI's New Delhi Office, but it certainly does not hurt.

The moment we learned of the attacks, Steve made his way to Mumbai. All he had were the clothes on his back, his Blackberry, and his cricket gear.

He immediately made contact with his Indian counterparts and got to work. No red tape, no turf battles—just first responders, standing shoulder to shoulder in a time of crisis.

For three days, Mumbai was a blur of gunshots, explosions, fire, and confusion. In the midst of that mayhem, Steve helped to rescue Americans trapped inside the Taj Hotel.

He set up lines of communication with his FBI and intelligence community counterparts. And he coordinated the arrival of our Rapid Deployment Team.

Even before the crisis ended, the investigation had begun. Agents from FBI offices in New Delhi and Islamabad joined forces with the Indian government, the CIA, the State Department, MI-6, and New Scotland Yard.

Through these partnerships, we had unprecedented access to evidence and intelligence. Agents and analysts conducted more than 60 interviews, including that of the lone surviving attacker. Our forensic specialists pulled fingerprints from improvised explosive devices. They recovered data from damaged cell phones, in one case by literally wiring a smashed phone back together.

At the same time, we collected, analyzed, and disseminated intelligence to our partners at home and abroad—not only to determine how these attacks were planned, and by whom, but to ensure that if a second wave of attacks was in the offing, we possessed the intelligence to stop it.

Our work in Mumbai was not out of the ordinary. To counter these threats, we must first understand them through intelligence. Once we gain an understanding, our law enforcement authorities allow us to move against individuals and networks.

We are not an intelligence service that collects, but does not act; nor are we a law enforcement service that acts without knowledge. Today's FBI is a security service, fusing the capability to understand the breadth and scope of threats, with the capability to dismantle those same threats.

But we understand that we do not operate in isolation. Through our international training programs at the FBI Academy, we are on a first-name basis with thousands of officers around the world—a brotherhood and sisterhood of partners. And in a time of crisis, that familiarity—that friendship—fosters an immediate and effective response.

## **Community Outreach**

We must continue to work with our law enforcement and intelligence partners around the world. But we must also work here in the United States with the citizens we serve, to identify and disrupt those who would do us harm.

Too often, we run up against a wall between law enforcement and the community—a wall based on myth and misperception of the work we do.

We know that the best way to tear down that wall is brick by brick, person by person.

Yet we understand the reluctance of some communities to sit down at the table with us. They may come from countries where national police forces and security services engender fear and mistrust.

Oftentimes, the communities from which we need the most help are those who trust us the least. But it is in these communities that we must re-double our efforts.

One pattern in particular concerns us.

Over the years since September 11th, we have learned of young men from communities in the United States, radicalized and recruited here to travel to countries such as Afghanistan or Iraq, Yemen or Somalia. They may be recruited to participate in the fighting, or, in the extreme case, to become suicide bombers.

A man from Minneapolis became what we believe to be the first U.S. citizen to carry out a terrorist suicide bombing. The attack occurred last October in northern Somalia, but it appears that this individual was radicalized in his hometown in Minnesota.

The prospect of young men, indoctrinated and radicalized within their own communities and induced to travel to Somalia to take up arms—and to kill themselves and perhaps many others—is a perversion of the immigrant story.

The parents of many of these young men risked everything to come to America, to provide their children with a brighter, more stable future. For these parents to leave a war-torn country only to find that their children have been convinced to return to that way of life is indeed heartbreaking.

And it raises the question of whether these young men will one day come home, and, if so, what they might undertake here.

These parents are understandably worried about the welfare of their children. We, too, are concerned—not only for these families, but for the larger community.

Members of the FBI's Community Outreach teams meet with members of these communities to look at these issues.

Together, we are making progress. But there remains much work to be done.

The simple truth is that we cannot do our jobs without the trust of the American people. And we cannot build that trust without reaching out to say, "We in the Bureau are on your side. We stand ready to help."

## **Conclusion**

The world we live in has changed in countless ways. And while change can have negative consequences, it can lead to new discoveries. It can herald new perspectives, new ideas, and new ways of doing business.

Yet even in times of great change, certain constants remain: the desire for safety and security...the hope for peace and prosperity...and the need for solidarity against forces that might otherwise divide us.

These constants are the same in communities and countries around the world. It is these constants that we in the Bureau strive to protect each and every day.

The universe of crime and terrorism will no doubt continue to expand. And we in the FBI will continue in our mission to find what we believe to be out there, but cannot always see.

We understand that when one of us is at risk, we are all at risk. An attack against one of us is an attack against all of us. And any failure is a collective failure.

Only by moving forward together, as one community, will we make lasting progress.

Thank you for having me here today.

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