

# RADICALIZATION IN THE U.S. AND THE RISE OF TERRORISM

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## JOINT HEARING

BEFORE THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY  
AND THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS  
OF THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
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# **RADICALIZATION IN THE U.S. AND THE RISE OF TERRORISM**

**Wednesday, September 14, 2016**

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY, JOINT WITH THE  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS,  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The subcommittees met, pursuant to call, at 2:22 p.m., in Room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Ron DeSantis [chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security] presiding.

Present from the Subcommittee on National Security: Representatives DeSantis, Mica, Duncan, Hice, Hurd, and Lynch.

Present from the Subcommittee on Government Operations: Representatives Meadows, Carter, Grothman, Connolly, Maloney, and Plaskett.

Mr. DESANTIS. The Subcommittee on National Security and the Subcommittee on Government Operations will come to order. Without objection, the chair is authorized to declare a recess at any time.

On June 12, 2016, Omar Mateen killed 49 people and injured another 53 in an attack on a nightclub in Orlando. The shooter made three calls to 911 during the attack. According to FBI Director James Comey, Mateen dedicated his attack to the Islamic State and its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. During the calls, Mateen also expressed admiration for the Tsarnaev brothers, the Boston Marathon bombers, as well as a Florida suicide bomber for the al-Nusrah Front, a group that engages in terrorism in Syria.

While some, such as Attorney General Loretta Lynch, were unsure about Mateen's motivations, the evidence points in only one direction: He killed in support of a terrorist ideology.

Prior to the shooting, Mateen was investigated by the FBI. That investigation, which began in May of 2013, was more than just an inquiry. The FBI interviewed him twice, dispatched an informant to get close to him, conducted surveillance of his movements, and scrutinized his communications.

Ten months later the investigation was closed. Agents concluded that Mateen was not a threat and had broken no laws. He was put on a watch list during his investigation, but once the investigation was closed, he was removed from the list.

Two months after that investigation concluded, Mateen again came onto the FBI's radar when Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, a Florida man who attended the same mosque as Mateen, blew himself up as a suicide bomber for the Al Qaeda-affiliated al-Nusrah

Front in Syria. And he had gone to Syria previously, trained, came back to Florida undetected, went back to commit that attack.

The second investigation apparently ended when the FBI could find no connection of consequence between Mateen and the suicide bomber.

Although the FBI's own investigation of its handling of the Mateen case is ongoing, there have been no suggestions that the Bureau handled the Mateen case any differently than the thousands of other terrorist leads that it receives annually.

Now, both Al Qaeda's global network, as well as the Islamic State, among several other terrorist networks around the world, promote a global jihadist ideology. As the Congressional Research Service has found, these terrorists use, quote, "Islam as an ideological and/or religious justification for their belief in the establishment of a global caliphate, a jurisdiction governed by a Muslim civil and religious leader known as the caliph, via violent means," end quote.

This committee began to look at the issue of radicalization by ISIS and other terrorist groups on October 28, 2015, when we held a hearing entitled "Radicalization: Social Media and the Rise of Terrorism."

The Orlando attack underscores the importance of the committee's investigation into the ways terrorists in the United States become radicalized. This investigation is relevant to protecting the public from future attacks.

Now, the June 12 attack in Orlando, the July 14 attack in Nice, France, and other recent terrorist attacks in the United States and abroad, committed by radicalized Islamic extremists target unsuspecting populations in vulnerable public places, represents the prevailing template for terrorist attacks. In just the last 7 months, attacks in Orlando, Nice, Brussels, San Bernardino, and Paris revealed that ISIS has become successful at using our country's own population against itself.

Indeed, recent reports indicate that since 2011, over 30,000 people from over 100 different countries have traveled to the conflict zone in Syria and Iraq to join the fighting there. This group includes over 4,500 Westerners and over 250 Americans, all of whom have joined or attempted to join extremist groups in an effort to wage jihad.

Recent terrorist attacks have also shown that so-called lone wolf terrorism has become a growing concern for government and law enforcement agencies in the United States. Individual terrorists have proven capable of committing a wide range of violent attacks, even though those individuals had no formal connection to terrorist groups. These have included mass shootings, bombings, assassinations.

The unprecedented speed with which such individuals are being radicalized by violent Islamic extremists is difficult for law enforcement to track and is straining the ability of government to monitor and intercept suspects. Part of this may have to do with the very technological advances that have otherwise improved our way of life.

Research has shown that since the terrorist attacks of September 11, the preferred method for recruiting radicals had changed. Be-

fore 9/11, the Internet contributed to only 3 percent of all radicalizations, but as of 2014, it contributed to roughly 20 percent.

The evolution of radical movements may also play a role in the speed by which potential terrorists become radicalized. Today, only 42 percent of radicals identify with a specific terrorist organization, compared to 63 percent between the 1960s and 1990s.

The long-term trend towards so-called lone wolf terrorism makes it challenging to stop terrorist attacks before they occur. Authorities have had far more success penetrating plots concocted by several different people than by individuals who simply choose to act on their own. U.S. policies regarding intelligence, military operations, and immigration should reflect this new reality.

I thank our witnesses for their testimony today as it is important that we continue to examine the issue related to radicalization by Islamic extremists and what can be done to combat this growing problem.

And I now recognize the ranking member of the Subcommittee on National Security, Mr. Lynch, for his opening statement.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I want to thank yourself and Chairman Meadows and Ranking Member Connolly for holding this hearing to examine the threat of extremism and radicalization, especially of the homegrown ilk. And I would also like to thank today's expert witnesses for helping the committee with its work.

As reported by the Combined Joint Task Force Operation Inherent Resolve last month, the U.S.-led coalition to combat ISIS has killed at least 45,000 ISIS fighters since September of 2014 and liberated about 25,000 square kilometers in Iraq and Syria. This amounts to more than half of what ISIS previously controlled in Iraq and roughly 20 percent of formerly held territory in Syria.

According to Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, the terrorist organization is also on the verge of losing its regional stronghold in Libya as its fighters retreat from their tactical center in the city of Sirte.

It is clear that the battlefield losses have degraded ISIS to some degree and their ability to maintain offensive operations on the ground in Iraq and Syria and Libya and recruit other U.S. and foreign fighters to the region. However, the facts on the ground have also led the group to shift its militant strategy towards directing and inspiring terrorist attacks in the West.

FBI Director James Comey recent predicted that while the global coalition will eventually crush ISIS, and I quote him here, "Through the fingers of that crush are going to come hundreds of really dangerous people," close quote, intent on bringing the fight to Western Europe and the United States. He has also noted that the FBI is tracking nearly 800 ISIS-related cases across our country. That is 80 percent of all the FBI cases nationwide.

This strategic shift has already manifested itself in an escalation of ISIS-directed or ISIS-inspired attacks in Western countries and worldwide. These include the coordinated suicide bombings and shootings in Paris, Brussels, Istanbul, and Ankara, as well the cargo truck attack in Nice, France, the cafe attack in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and in the United States, the terrorist attacks in San Bernardino and Orlando.

The June 20, 2016, attack in Orlando is also the most recent example of the rising threat of homegrown violent extremism in the U.S. that has accompanied ISIS' continued calls for lone wolf attacks. As reflected in the 911 transcript released by the FBI, the Orlando shooter, Omar Mateen, repeatedly pledged his allegiance to ISIS while he perpetrated the attack, and one day later ISIS issued a statement deeming Mateen one of the soldiers of the caliphate.

Given the grave threat posed by homegrown violent extremism, national security demands that we work in a bipartisan manner to adopt practical reforms based on the lessons learned from Orlando, San Bernardino, and other attacks.

Since 9/11, the FBI has primarily focused its counterterrorism efforts on disrupting terrorist networks. However, the facts surrounding Orlando indicate that we must also ensure that Federal law enforcement and Homeland Security agencies are adapting to the prevalence of lone wolf attacks that are inspired to be conducted by foreign terrorist organizations.

I would note that the FBI previously investigated Mr. Mateen on radicalization grounds, as the chairman noted, on two separate occasions and even placed him on a terrorist watch list. He did not, however, remain on the agency's radar given the absence of any, quote, "ties of consequence," close quote.

Now, common sense also dictates that we address the accessibility of firearms to individuals who are known or suspected terrorists. While Federal law specifies several grounds to disqualify a potential buyer from firearms eligibility, being on a terrorist watch list is not currently one of those.

Moreover, we must continue to develop a long-term and comprehensive strategy to counter the pervasiveness of extremism and their messaging, abroad and at home. And as recommended by Ms. Farah Pandith, appointed by Secretary Clinton in 2009 to serve as the first State Department Special Representative to Muslim Communities, future actions designed to combat radicalization and homegrown violent extremism should include diplomatic and economic consequences for foreign nations that support the exportation of extremist ideologies. They must also include coordinated and proactive efforts to push back against extremist propaganda online.

I want to thank you again, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to examining issues related to the homegrown violent extremism in our country and other forms of radicalization with our witnesses. And I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

I now recognize Mr. Meadows, chairman of the Subcommittee on Government Operations, for his opening statement.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I thank you and the Ranking Member, Mr. Lynch, for your leadership in making sure that this hearing happened.

Good afternoon. Welcome to all of the witnesses.

I would like to first begin by offering not only my thoughts, but my prayers for the victims and families that we lost in this summer's string of terror attacks throughout the world, specifically this June. As we all know now, in Orlando the event cut short nearly

50 innocent lives, which was the worst attack on American soil since 9/11. And I will continue to pray and encourage others to continue to pray for those who grieve, and pray for those who were injured for a complete recovery.

We must remain vigilant, however, and remember that an act of terrorism by radical Islamic extremism and extremists like what happened in Orlando could have happened anywhere in the United States, including my home State of North Carolina. The Americans that have been radicalized as part of an Islamic extremist movement do not fit necessarily any sort of a demographic model. It is seemingly random in nature.

And the attacks that are made up from this homegrown violent extremist group are especially challenging for our law enforcement officers. In fact, the attacks in Orlando were carried out by a lone wolf terrorist who had already been investigated by the FBI. And so it shows the complexity of what we are dealing with.

Today's hearing will examine ways in which we can give our law enforcement agencies and communities the tools that they need to prevent this lone wolf radicalization before it starts.

I might add that at times we continue to talk about lone wolf, but, indeed, they are not necessarily lone wolves, because they are connected to someone, somewhere who assists them in carrying this out. Indeed, anyone with a smartphone has the potential to become radicalized. Jihadists have been able to exploit the Internet as a medium for recruitment and the dissemination of propaganda and communication, and our witnesses hopefully will provide insight into how the Internet can provide an opportunity for our law enforcement and intelligence community to be able to identify these potential lone wolf actors and intercept terror plots and to counter the extremist message that is flooded, literally flooded, through social media by radical Islamic terrorist groups like ISIS.

This hearing will also be able to examine the strategies that both law enforcement and the administration can undertake to address the growing threat of radicalized Americans returning to the U.S. as foreign fighters. This threat from the foreign fighters cannot be overstated. And as we look at that, the devastating attacks this past November in Paris were carried out by a French national who, indeed, had been trained with ISIS in Syria and then returned to France. And a few months later, in March of this year, foreign fighters from the same ISIS cell as the Paris attackers carried out a series of bombings in Brussels in what would be the deadliest act of terrorism in Belgium's history.

So I look forward to hearing from each one of our witnesses today on how the United States can best address this radicalization of homegrown violent extremists and the unpredictability of lone wolf attacks and the rising threat of foreign fighters.

And finally, pray for our law enforcement officers who have a target on their back, indeed, each and every day. And I would like to thank you, and I thank the chairman for his leadership on this as you come and testify on this critical matter.

I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

I will hold the record open for 5 legislative days for any members who would like to submit a written statement.

We will now recognize our panel of witnesses. I am pleased to welcome Dr. Daveed Gartenstein-Ross, senior fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies; Mr. Matt Mayer, visiting fellow of homeland security studies at the American Enterprise Institute; Mr. David Inserra, policy analyst of foreign and national security policy at the Heritage Foundation; and Mr. Richard Cohen, president of the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Welcome to you all.

Pursuant to committee rules, all witnesses will be sworn in before they testify. If you can please rise and raise your right hand.

Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are about to give will be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God. Thank you. Please be seated.

All witnesses answered in the affirmative.

In order to allow time for discussion, please limit your oral testimony to 5 minutes. Your entire written statement will be made part of the record.

Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, you are up.

#### **WITNESS STATEMENTS**

##### **STATEMENT OF DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS**

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you all for holding this important hearing on this topic.

Terrorism today is not what it was even 5 years ago. It is a much deeper problem and a much more complex problem than it used to be. Chairman DeSantis spoke of technology as being one of the key factors. I agree with this. We are living in a world that is more interconnected, especially through social media. We are living in a world with much more encryption and where much more is dark to law enforcement than it used to be, and where networks can become demonstrably thicker, even in Western countries, than they were before.

When we look at the scale of the problem, it is clear that terrorism is growing across multiple ideologies. ISIS is, of course, omnipresent in our statements, as it should be. I think that jihadist terrorism is the biggest threat we face today. But when we look beyond it to sovereign citizens, White nationalism, Black nationalist groups, it is very clear that we are seeing a rise in substate violence where some of the same external factors are helping to drive violence across all these ideologies.

Looking at ISIS alone, we have had already, just since the caliphate was announced in 2014, over 100 arrests of members; we have law enforcement cases at the Federal level in all 50 States; more than 250 Americans as of the end of last year who had either tried to go to Syria to join this extremist group or who succeeded in doing so; and a number of Americans, perhaps around 20, who have been killed over in the Syria-Iraq theater. This is a much bigger explosion in terrorism across this particular ideology than we have seen previously.

Now, when we look at the factors I spoke to, social media makes us live in a much more interconnected world, and what is different about social media, or as its sometimes referred to, the Social Web, as distinct from Web 1.0 and 2.0, is that it puts people in proximity

with each other. It is not CNN or ESPN that is the message. The message is other users. It fosters what one terrorism expert referred to as a sense of remote intimacy in which you feel as though you really get to know and are intimate with somebody who can be half a world away living in Raqqa.

ISIS in particular has been very good at scoping out people who would potentially be amenable to their message and who might be drawn into the movement, preying upon vulnerabilities, needs, and other factors that are manifested in online users.

Secondly, ISIS has been very good at using what I call virtual planners, people who aren't in any sort of physical proximity with terrorists but from abroad can help them to choose targets, choose timing, and even provide suggestions about technical details like bomb design.

In the United States, we saw a virtual planner at play. This was in the Garland, Texas, attack that occurred last year in which Junaid Hussain was in touch with one of the attackers, Elton Simpson, and knew ahead of time that this attack was going to take place.

We also can see, based on social media, that grievance can be stripped of context and omnipresence. We have seen this in a number of different examples. One example that comes up is some of the tough job of law enforcement. You have had both killings that are unjustifiable and that quite justifiably produced protests. You have other cases where it is not clear except to those who were on the scene what actually happened. But things can still spiral before the State can react and before an investigation can be done.

Beyond the U.S. also, Internet penetration is growing in a number of critical regions. It is 29 percent in Africa today, 53 percent in the Middle East, under 25 percent in South Asia. Just as we have seen the Internet have a big role in radicalization in places where it has high penetration, as more of the world comes online, we will see the same dynamic occur in multiple theaters.

Now, in terms of encryption the impact is very clear. On page 10 of my testimony I have a diagram of the Paris-Brussels network. This network represents a watershed. It is the first time that you had a jihadist network in Europe carry out a major attack, that being the Paris attack, then survive the full weight of law enforcement and intelligence resources coming down on them and carry out another major attack in Brussels.

If you look at the depth of this network it is the kind of thing experts would have told you, correctly, was impossible in a Western state just 5 years ago. The big thing that has changed is encryption. No longer can governments reliably depend upon their electronic surveillance superiority in trying to disrupt these networks.

Now, as to what the United States Government can do, I have a few suggestions. One thing is provide transparency. If you look at one situation that could have spiraled earlier this year, that being the standoff at the National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon, the FBI, when it came to ending the standoff, was able to put the entire thing on video and get it up on to YouTube quickly in order to dispel the kind of conspiracy theories and grievances that they understood could arise from that incident.

Secondly, I believe that we need to move beyond what I call the myth of the lone wolf. In Europe there were a number of attacks prior to the Paris attack that were connected to that network that were described as lone wolf incorrectly, things like the Brussels Jewish Museum shooting, the Amsterdam-Paris train attack in which Americans were able to thwart that attack. In all of these cases, you had connections to the later Paris attackers. We missed the opportunity to understand that the network was there.

In the United States we should not have a default assumption that attacks are lone wolf. I would say that, based on my review of the Orlando case, it isn't yet clear to me that this is actually a lone wolf case. We should be open, especially in this age of encryption, to the notion that there might be a network and our investigation isn't done right away.

I look forward to further discussing things that we can do and how we can approach this very thorny problem set when we get to the questions. Thank you all.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Gartenstein-Ross follows:]

CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY: FOUNDATION FOR DEFENSE OF DEMOCRACIES

**House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**  
*Subcommittee on National Security, Subcommittee on Government Operations*

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# Radicalization in the U.S. and the Rise of Terrorism

DAVEED GARTENSTEIN-ROSS

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**Washington, DC**  
**September 14, 2016**



[www.defenddemocracy.org](http://www.defenddemocracy.org)

Chairman DeSantis, Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member Lynch, and Ranking Member Connolly, and distinguished members of both subcommittees, on behalf of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, it's an honor to appear before you to discuss today's topic.

This country is in the midst of the largest spike in homegrown jihadist terrorist activity that it has ever seen, both in the overall number of cases and also the number of fatalities caused by terrorists claiming to act in service of the jihadist cause. While I assess jihadism to remain the top domestic terrorist threat, adherents to several other U.S.-based movements have also engaged more frequently in terrorist violence in recent years, including members of the anti-government Sovereign Citizens movement, and both white nationalists and black nationalists.

This testimony will first show that the problem of terrorism is growing in scale. It then argues that both analysts and the media have an unjustifiable default assumption that relatively small-scale attacks have likely been carried out by "lone wolves." This prevalence of this assumption was crystal clear in the wake of Omar Mateen's bloody June 2016 attack in Orlando.

### **The Growing Threat of Terrorism**

By the end of last year, it was demonstrable that the United States was in the midst of an unprecedented surge in jihadist militant activity. This pattern could also be discerned in other Western countries.

By now, federal prosecutors have charged over 100 people in the U.S. in connection with Islamic State (ISIS) activity.<sup>1</sup> But when looking beyond criminal charges, the magnitude of the problem becomes more clear. In one of the most rigorous studies examining ISIS's presence and activities in America, Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes of George Washington University's Program on Extremism wrote:

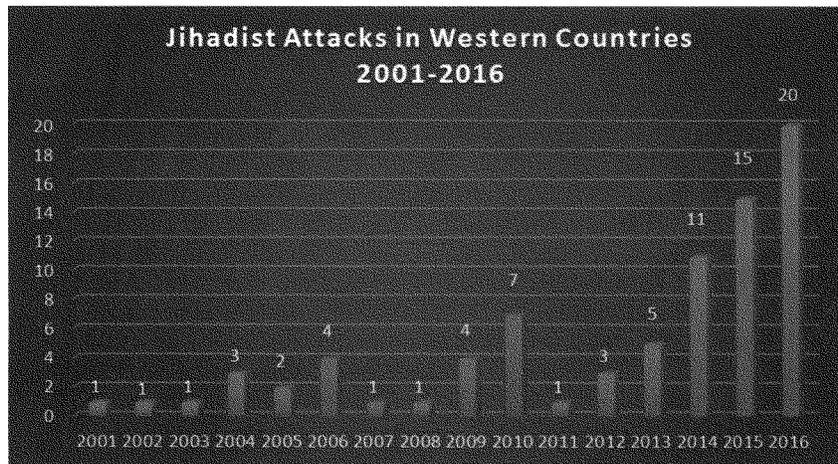
In June 2015 the FBI states that "upwards of 200 Americans have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria to participate in the conflict." A few weeks later, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence estimated that more than 250 individuals from the U.S. had traveled or attempted to travel to the conflict area, a few dozen had joined the ranks of ISIS, and some 20 had died.

Moreover, the surge in the number of American foreign fighters is small compared to those who sympathize with and embrace ISIS's ideology. American authorities have consistently said that the popularity of ISIS's propaganda, driven largely by its savvy social media tactics, wholly overshadows that of al Qaeda. Tellingly, in May 2015 FBI Director James Comey spoke of "hundreds, maybe thousands" of ISIS sympathizers and potential recruits across the country, disclosing that the Bureau had related investigations running in all 50 states. A

<sup>1</sup> See Adam Goldman, Jia Lynn Yang and John Muyskens, "The Islamic State's Suspected Inroads into America," *Washington Post*, updates August 8, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/national/isis-suspects/>.

few months later, in October 2015, Comey revealed that the FBI had a staggering 900 active investigations against homegrown violent extremists.<sup>2</sup>

These trends have remained consistent since. The amount of domestic jihadist activity is far greater than it has been in any previous period, including the spike in homegrown terrorist cases in 2009-10. The number of attacks is also growing across various Western countries, as this graphic recently produced by terrorism researcher Sam Mullins makes clear:



It has become an item of received wisdom that the jihadist threat we face in the United States is not the same as that which confronts the Europeans. This is true for a variety of reasons—including the American Muslim community’s level of integration and affluence—but these are not normal times in terms of the domestic threat of jihadism. Several factors are pushing the level of risk steeply upward. First, the explosion of jihadist social media usage, and the proficiency with which these groups use the online space, has created far more mobilization than we have seen in any previous period.<sup>3</sup> Second, the bloody Syria conflict—in which jihadists have managed to become a significant power on the battlefield—has had a tremendously galvanizing impact. Third, the growing pressure put on Muslims’ place in American society, including the

<sup>2</sup> Lorenzo Vidino and Seamus Hughes, *ISIS in America: From Retweets to Raqqa* (Washington, DC: Program on Extremism, George Washington University, 2015), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> For more on jihadist use of social media, see, e.g., Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Nathaniel Barr, “The Social Science of Online Radicalization,” *War on the Rocks*, October 29, 2015; J.M. Berger and Jonathon Morgan, *The ISIS Twitter Census: Defining and Describing the Population of ISIS Supporters on Twitter* (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2015) (describing ISIS’s use of Twitter at the group’s height on that platform); J.M. Berger and Heather Perez, *The Islamic State’s Diminishing Returns on Twitter: How Suspensions Are Limiting the Social Networks of English-Speaking ISIS Supporters* (Washington, DC: George Washington University Program on Extremism, 2016) (describing ISIS’s growing challenges on Twitter after the platform focused on account takedowns).

focus put on the issue in this year's presidential campaign, may further the sense of grievance within this community.

And jihadism is far from the only domestic terrorist challenge that we face. Anti-government violence has been growing as well. Here are some examples from the past several years:

- 2010: Man flies plane into IRS building in Texas; police officers killed by Sovereign Citizens in Arkansas.
- 2011: Alaska Peacemakers Militia members arrested and charged with plotting to kill or kidnap state troopers and a Fairbanks judge; Georgia militia members arrested in an alleged plot to bomb federal buildings, attack Atlanta and other cities with ricin, and murder law enforcement officials.
- 2012: Sovereign Citizens ambush and murder police in Louisiana.
- 2013: Sovereign Citizens arrested in Las Vegas allegedly had plans to execute random police officers.
- 2014: Robert Talbot, Jr. arrested for alleged scheme to launch "American Insurgent Movement"; antigovernment extremists murder two police officers in Las Vegas.
- 2015: Antigovernment Sovereign Citizen arrested prior to alleged coup plot in West Virginia.
- 2016: Armed occupation of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge.

There has also been disturbing racially-motivated violence in recent years that can be characterized as terrorism. Recent examples of white nationalist/racist violence include:

- 2011: David Pedersen and Holly Grigsby engaged in a multi-state killing spree, killing four in three states.
- 2012: Wade Michael Page murdered six people during an attack on a Sikh temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin.
- 2014: Frazier Glenn Miller opened fire at Jewish institutions in Overland Park, Kansas, killing three.
- 2015: Dylann Storm Roof, hoping to incite a race war, killed nine African-American churchgoers at a bible study; a group of white separatists shot five African-Americans at a Black Lives Matter protest.
- 2016: Three people were stabbed during clashes at a Ku Klux Klan rally in Anaheim.

There have also been black nationalist-related acts of terrorism, often related to the shootings of African Americans by police officers that have also helped to spur the Black Lives Matter movement. Gavin Long and Micah Johnson are recent examples of this phenomenon.

As we see sub-state violence growing across several countries, including our own, one factor I would point to as particularly significant is social media, which I mentioned previously. Social media can make fringe causes embraced by disparate individuals more popular, and can hasten mobilization. This is true of both non-violent protests and also sub-state violence.

#### **The Orlando Attack and the Over-Categorization of Lone Wolf Terrorism**

Omar Mateen, who struck the Pulse nightclub in Orlando on June 12, 2016, wanted the world to associate his attack with ISIS. Mateen felt so strongly about this that he took time out of his rampage to call 911 and swear allegiance to ISIS leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. For its own part, ISIS was happy to associate itself with his attack. The group's Amaq News Agency has described Mateen as a "fighter from the Islamic State."

But should the Pulse attack be considered an "ISIS attack"? Almost immediately, commentators and experts referred to it as an act of lone wolf terrorism, the implication being that both Mateen and ISIS overstated his connection to the jihadist organization. The rush to label Orlando an act of lone wolf terrorism is part of a broader trend, one that has proven costly in the recent past.<sup>4</sup> We can see the tendency to quickly label attacks as lone wolf in other recent incidents. On July 14, Mohamed Lahouaiej Bouhlel, a Tunisian national residing in France, killed over 80 and wounded hundreds when he ploughed a 19-ton cargo truck through crowds celebrating Bastille Day in the southern French city of Nice. Mere days after the Nice massacre, a 17-year-old Afghan migrant seeking asylum in Germany attacked passengers on a train in Würzburg with an axe and a knife, wounding four before police killed him. A suicide bombing on July 24 injured 15 in the German city of Ansbach, and on July 26, two attackers claiming allegiance to ISIS stormed a church in a suburb of the French city of Rouen, slit an 84-year-old priest's throat, and took hostages.

These incidents are part of the aforementioned trend of increasing violence carried out by lone individuals. Analysts, journalists, and scholars were quick to label each perpetrator of these recent attacks as lone wolves: individuals who lacked substantial connections to ISIS or other jihadist groups, and who carried out their operations without the assistance of others. The designation has generally been applied within 24 hours of these attacks, before significant intelligence about an incident's planning and execution has emerged—and long before authorities have concluded their investigation. Observers have repeatedly erred by definitively categorizing attacks as lone-wolf operations when they would later turn out to be connected to broader cells or networks.

The tendency to view lone attackers as unconnected to the broader ISIS organization prevented observers from fully comprehending the magnitude of the network that was behind the complex coordinated attacks in Paris and Brussels. In April 2015, Sid Ahmed Ghlam, an Algerian national studying in France, called for medical help after accidentally shooting himself in the leg while handling a firearm. Authorities' investigation revealed that Ghlam, who was in possession of several guns, was planning to attack churches in the Paris area, and may have been involved in the murder of a woman found dead in a Paris suburb. In August 2015, three Americans restrained Ayoub El-Khazzani, a 25-year old Moroccan national, before he could open fire on passengers traveling by train from Amsterdam to Paris.

At the time, the two attacks were seen as disconnected, with Khazzani generally labeled a lone wolf. And the bumbling incompetence of both incidents—Ghlam shot himself, while Khazzani's weapon jammed before he could get off a shot—made the attacks seem like the work of amateurs. Meanwhile, ISIS fueled perceptions that it was primarily interested in inspiring lone-

<sup>4</sup> For more on this point, see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Nathaniel Barr, "The Myth of Lone Wolf Terrorism," *Foreign Affairs*, July 26, 2016, from which parts of this section are adapted.

wolf attacks rather than guiding them, with a pro-ISIS media outlet producing a propaganda video shortly after Khazzani's botched attack calling on "lone lions" to kill the group's enemies.

But after the devastating November 2015 attacks in Paris, it became clear that initial judgments had been wrong. A March 2016 *New York Times* article by Rukmini Callimachi detailed how Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the ground commander of the Paris attacks, had directed Ghلام, Khazzani, and several others to carry out attacks in Europe, even as he was preparing the Paris operation.<sup>5</sup> Although he of course wanted these small-scale plots to succeed, they also helped deflect attention from ISIS's more sophisticated operational planning, serving as a "smoke screen" that allowed the group to "calmly prepare" its future operations, in the words of one French official. Because counterterrorism analysts and officials viewed Ghلام, Khazzani, and other attackers as unrelated to one another, they did not identify the operational infrastructure involved in coordinating ISIS's various attacks in Europe.

The failure to identify common ties between supposed lone wolves and ISIS is part of a broader and long-standing pattern of underestimating the scope of jihadist networks in the West. An official inquiry into the July 7, 2005, terrorist attacks in London, for example, described the cell that carried it out as autonomous and self-actuating rather than tied to al-Qaeda.<sup>6</sup> The idea that the London bombings were unrelated to al-Qaeda was definitively refuted by a commemorative video the group released in July 2006, which showed a martyrdom tape recorded by cell leader Mohammad Sidique Khan. Al Qaeda's then-deputy emir, Ayman al-Zawahiri, revealed that Khan and fellow plotter Shehzad Tanweer had visited al-Qaeda's training camps in Pakistan "seeking martyrdom," an account that has been corroborated by Western intelligence agencies. Bob Ayers, a security expert at London's Chatham House, commented when the new video was released, "It makes the police look pretty bad. It means the investigation was either wrong, or they identified links but were reluctant to reveal them."<sup>7</sup>

Since then, officials and analysts have often continued to ignore attackers' ties with broader networks. Part of the reason for the consistent failure may lie in a desire to avoid culpability; observers may perceive attacks carried out by networks as something officials should have prevented, but potential lone attackers are notoriously difficult to spot. Another reason may be a desire to downplay networks due to policy preferences, such as wanting to avoid taking kinetic action against the networks driving these attacks. But it is a mistake to conflate facts with policy preferences, and the truth is that terrorists' ties to broader networks are frequently overlooked.

The idea that lone-attacker plots carried out in 2016 were the work of individuals is already being discredited. When ISIS claimed responsibility for the July 2016 Würzburg train attack, the group released a video featuring the perpetrator that demonstrated ISIS had advance knowledge of his strike. Less than a week after the Nice attack, French authorities revealed that Lahouaiej Bouhlel may not have acted alone, as several individuals were detained. One suspect had posed

<sup>5</sup> Rukmini Callimachi, "How ISIS Built the Machinery of Terror under Europe's Gaze," *New York Times*, March 29, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> House of Commons, *Report of the Official Account of the Bombings in London on 7th July 2005* (May 11, 2006), available at [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11\\_05\\_06\\_narrative.pdf](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/11_05_06_narrative.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> Sean Alfano, "Video: 2 London Bombers Were Qaeda," CBS News, July 7, 2006, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/video-2-london-bombers-were-qaeda/>.

for pictures in the truck that Lahouaiej Bouhlef drove through a celebrating crowd. The perpetrator had sent a text message to an alleged coconspirator minutes before the attack requesting “more weapons.”

The nature of radicalization and operational planning in the digital age has complicated efforts to interpret and analyze attacks perpetrated by single individuals. Jihadists plotting murders in the West used to congregate in person, meeting in small groups in underground mosques, houses, or other discrete locations. Radicalization occurred through in-person contact. Counterterrorism officials looked for physical hubs of recruitment, tapping phones and scanning surveillance videos for evidence that cells were meeting.

But with the social media boom and the growth in encrypted communications, radicalization and operational planning can easily take place entirely online. ISIS has capitalized on evolving communications technologies, building cohesive online communities that facilitate radicalization. The group has also established a team of “virtually planners” who use the Internet to identify recruits, and to coordinate and direct attacks, often without meeting the perpetrators in person. Junaid Hussain, a British ISIS operative who was killed in August 2015, played the role of virtual planner for the May 2015 strike against the Draw Muhammad contest in Garland, Texas. Hussain had communicated online with attacker Elton Simpson beforehand, and was the first to celebrate it on social media. It may take months—or longer—to detect the role of virtual planners in attacks.

The changing nature of operational planning underscores the need for a new paradigm for understanding the relationship between single attackers and networks. It no longer makes sense to apply pre-digital-age thinking to jihadist attacks perpetrated in the age of Twitter, Telegram, and end-to-end encryption.

Instead, it is useful to think of four categories of attacks, with descending connections to a network. The first category consists of operations in which the attacker was trained and dispatched by an organization. Reda Hame, who traveled to Syria and received weapons training from Abaaoud before being sent back to Europe, fits this mold. The second category is attackers in touch via social media with virtual planners such as Hussain, who help set targets, determine the timing of the attack, and provide technical assistance. The third category is operatives who are in contact with a militant group via online communications but do not receive specific instructions about carrying out an attack. Finally, the fourth category comprises the true lone wolves, individuals who strike without ever communicating with jihadist networks.

It is clear that few of the jihadists labeled lone wolves truly fit that definition. Recently, it seems that Europeans have been quicker to absorb that lesson. For example, after the recent gas canisters plot was foiled in France, it took little time for prosecutors to determine that the attackers had been directed by ISIS.<sup>8</sup> It’s not clear that we have absorbed that lesson in the U.S., but there are also networks at play in this country.

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<sup>8</sup> Camille Verdier, Steve Visser and Margot Haddad, “French Prosecutor: Women Who Planned Attack Were Directed by ISIS,” CNN, September 9, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/09/08/world/france-arrests-gas-cylinders-notre-dame/>.

### **ISIS's External Operations and the State of Networked Terrorism**

Currently networked terrorism is a far more powerful threat to Western countries than it has been in years, due to both a rise in mobilization to violence as well as a remarkable improvement in terrorist tradecraft due to numerous factors, including the explosion in end-to-end encryption. This section first looks at the network that recently carried out the Paris and Brussels attacks as an example of how networks function in 2016.<sup>9</sup>

The recent attacks in Paris and Brussels represent a watershed moment not just for ISIS, but for the entire jihadist movement. The attacks mark the first time that a single jihadist network succeeded in carrying out two separate mass casualty attacks in Europe. In the past, when jihadist networks struck in Europe, they were pursued with the full weight of European security and intelligence services, and relevant perpetrators were neutralized before they could mount a second attack.

ISIS's successes are the result of a complex strategy executed by officials in the Amn al-Kharji, a shadowy wing of ISIS's bureaucracy responsible for selecting and training external operatives and for planning terrorist attacks in areas outside of ISIS's core territory, including those in Europe. Though ISIS's attacks and plots in Europe have received a great deal of media attention, the Amn al-Kharji has largely stayed out of the spotlight. This aversion to publicity is deliberate, and demonstrates the Amn al-Kharji's importance to ISIS. While ISIS's military branches in Syria and Iraq readily advertise their exploits, the Amn al-Kharji is shrouded in secrecy, sometimes employing disinformation to mislead intelligence agencies. Nonetheless, enough information now has emerged in open-source reporting to paint a picture—however incomplete—of the Amn al-Kharji.

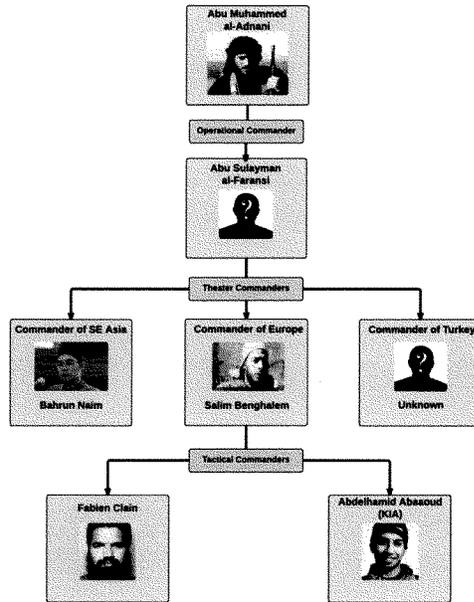
The most detailed information on the Amn al-Kharji comes from an interview given by an ISIS defector, known only as "Abu Khaled."<sup>10</sup> According to Abu Khaled, the Amn al-Kharji is one of four agencies that fall under ISIS's amniyat, or security apparatus. The other three agencies are the Amn al-Dawla, which is responsible for internal security within ISIS's territory; the Amn al-Dakhili, which is akin to an interior ministry; and the Amn al-Askari, or the military intelligence wing. Abu Khaled, a former member of the Amn al-Dawla, explained that the Amn al-Kharji was responsible for conducting espionage and terrorist attacks in enemy territory, and that the agency had developed intricate tactics enabling its operatives' infiltration. Indeed, long before the Amn al-Kharji put its attack plans for Brussels and Paris into motion, the branch spearheaded operations behind enemy lines in Syria and Iraq. By the time ISIS began investing serious resources in European operations, the Amn al-Kharji had already refined its tradecraft for attacks outside ISIS-controlled territory.

Abu Khaled's testimony sheds light on key players within the Amn al-Kharji's opaque structure. According to Abu Khaled, Abu Muhammad al-Adnani, ISIS's late spokesman who served as one of the organization's top officials until his death, appointed the commanders of each of the

<sup>9</sup> For more on this point, see Daveed Gartenstein-Ross & Nathaniel Barr, "Recent Attacks Illuminate the Islamic State's Europe Attack Network," Jamestown Foundation, April 27, 2016, from which parts of this section are adapted.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Weiss, "Confessions of an ISIS Spy," *Daily Beast*, November 15, 2015.

amniyat's four branches. Other reports identified the Syria-born Adnani as the operational commander of the Amn al-Kharji. However, given Adnani's role in managing multiple agencies within ISIS, it is highly likely that his position in the Amn al-Kharji had been largely bureaucratic. That is, Adnani likely signed off on external operations, but was not involved in operational planning.



Rather, responsibility for directing ISIS's external operations falls to an elusive figure known by his *kunya* (nom de guerre), Abu Sulayman al-Faransi. Despite his prominent role in ISIS, little personal information about al-Faransi is available. It is believed that—as his *kunya* suggests—Faransi is a French national. According to French sources, he now resides in northern Syria with his wife—also a French national—and two children. Reports allege that al-Faransi was promoted to external operations chief following the Paris attacks, suggesting that the Frenchman was rewarded for overseeing one of ISIS's most high-profile attacks. Al-Faransi's name also surfaced in investigations into the Brussels attacks. Belgian authorities investigating the contents of a computer owned by Ibrahim El Bakraoui, one of the two suicide bombers who struck the Zaventem airport, concluded that Bakraoui

had been in contact with al-Faransi, and that other cell members may have been, as well. Bakraoui had submitted attack plans to the Frenchman.

Below al-Faransi in the Amn al-Kharji are the theater commanders, responsible for planning operations in various regions that ISIS wants to target. Theater commanders are perhaps the most pivotal actors in ISIS's external operations structure, as they serve as a bridge between strategic planners and tactical operators. It appears that ISIS appoints theater commanders who originate from the regions over which they are given authority. For instance, ISIS's external operations in Southeast Asia are likely led by Bahrun Naim, an Indonesian militant now based in Syria who was responsible for coordinating the January 2016 attacks in Jakarta. ISIS has also likely appointed theater commanders for external operations in both Turkey and North Africa.

The theater commander for Europe is believed to be Salim Benghalem, another French national whose involvement in jihadism predates ISIS's emergence. Benghalem became radicalized in a French prison when serving an earlier sentence for attempted murder. He soon fell in with a network commonly known as the Buttes-Chaumont group, a Paris-based jihadist network involved in recruiting individuals to fight U.S. forces in Iraq in the mid-2000s. This group also included Cherif and Said Kouachi, the brothers who carried out the Charlie Hebdo massacre in January 2015. In 2011, Benghalem and Cherif Kouachi traveled to Yemen, where they received training from al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula.

Soon after traveling to Syria to join ISIS in early 2013, Benghalem was tapped to serve as a prison guard for French hostages whom ISIS had kidnapped. Several former prison guards from this group have emerged as key actors in ISIS's European external operations efforts. For instance, Mehdi Nemmouche, a fellow French national who guarded French hostages alongside Benghalem, returned to Europe and carried out an attack on the Brussels Jewish Museum in May 2014 that killed four. Naajim Laachraoui, a Belgian national who served as one of the suicide bombers at the Zaventem airport, had also been a guard. Benghalem now outranks all of his former prison guard colleagues.

As the theater commander for ISIS's European operations, Benghalem oversees several commanders responsible for training operatives, and planning and coordinating operations at the ground level. These tactical commanders play a hands-on role in ISIS's Europe operations, and sometimes participate in attacks. Given their more public role, these commanders often attract greater media scrutiny than their more discrete superiors. Such was the case for Abdelhamid Abaaoud, who was killed by French authorities several days after the Paris attacks. In January 2015, Abaaoud deployed to Athens, where he directed a cell based in the Belgian city of Verviers that was disrupted when Belgian authorities intercepted telephone calls between Abaaoud and the plotters.

Between the Verviers plot and the Paris attacks, Abaaoud spent his time training operatives and planning unsophisticated, low-cost operations in Europe. In the summer of 2015, Abaaoud trained Paris native Reda Hame and at least one other operative to carry out mass casualty attacks on soft targets in France and Spain. This plan was disrupted when authorities arrested Hame's counterpart in Spain. Abaaoud was also in contact with Ayoub El Khazzani, who was tackled by passengers when he tried to open fire during an August 2015 train ride from Amsterdam to Paris. Khazzani never traveled to Syria, suggesting that, in addition to training operatives already in ISIS-controlled territory, Abbaoud sought to inspire radicalized individuals based in Europe to carry out attacks on their own.

These small-scale plots distracted authorities, who, as I warned in the first part of this testimony, *never looked beyond the lone-wolf paradigm to find the terrorist networks of which the plotters were a part*. All the while, Abaaoud was planning the Paris attacks, his jihadist magnum opus. In a move uncharacteristic of a commander of his stature, Abaaoud traveled to Paris to oversee and coordinate the operation personally. Though there is little information on Abaaoud's activities in Europe in the months and weeks before the Paris attacks, multiple news outlets reported that he traveled to the United Kingdom in the summer of 2015, possibly to case potential targets or to coordinate with other militants. Abaaoud then personally coordinated and participated in the

Paris operations, dropping off one of the suicide bombers, opening fire on civilians in several different locations, and later driving to an area near the Bataclan and contacting militants inside the concert hall. Unlike the Verviers plot, Abaaoud was committed to personally seeing the Paris attacks through to completion.

Abaaoud planned additional attacks after the Paris massacre, but French authorities caught and killed him in a raid on an apartment in a Paris suburb. Though Abaaoud's death eliminated one of ISIS's most skilled external operatives, it is believed that ISIS quickly replaced him with Fabien Clain, a French convert whose voice was featured in the audio message in which ISIS claimed responsibility for the Paris attacks.

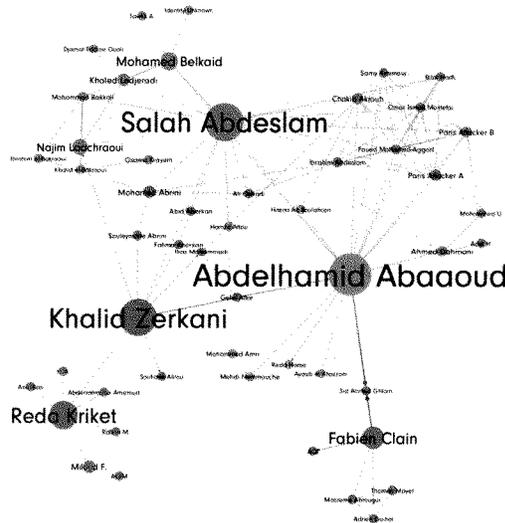
A look at the networks involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks provides further evidence of the sophistication of ISIS's external operations, and some indication of how jihadist networks will look in the United States (though U.S. networks are not be as sprawling, and are often somewhat less interlinked). ISIS utilized a networked approach in executing the two attacks. That is, the group built a vast network in Europe to prepare for the Paris attacks, with some militants serving in an operational capacity while others played a support and logistics role. That ISIS was able to sustain such a vast support infrastructure in Europe is striking, considering the challenges of evading European intelligence agencies. Even more remarkable is that ISIS was able to keep its support network largely intact following the Paris attacks, and then subsequently mobilize this network to strike again in Brussels just months later amid a heightened security atmosphere. This feat reflects both the magnitude of ISIS's European network and the quality of its tradecraft.

**Zerkani Network**

The Zerkani network is a complex web of individuals involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks. It includes key figures such as Salah Abdeslam, Abdelhamid Abaaoud, and Khalid Zerkani, along with numerous other operatives and support personnel.

**Edge Legend**

- V. Co-ordinator
- K. Key Worker
- S. Support Member
- P. Planner
- F. Financial Backer
- R. Recruitment
- I. Inspiration
- M. Motivation
- B. Belonging



The graphic above reveals the scope of the networks involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks. Abaaoud sits at the center of the network, attesting to his role as the overall coordinator of the

Paris attacks. Another key actor is Khalid Zerkani, an integral jihadist player in the Brussels neighborhood of Molenbeek, a hotbed of militancy that has served as a safe haven for ISIS operatives. Though Zerkani—who has been sentenced to 15 years in prison for his role as a jihadist recruiter—was not involved in either the Paris or Brussels attacks, the foreign fighter recruitment networks he established from 2012 to 2014 have been at the center of ISIS’s ongoing operations in Europe. Several key individuals involved in the Paris and Brussels attacks, including Abaaoud, Naajim Laachraoui and Salah Abdeslam, are directly linked to Zerkani, as was Reda Kriket, who had amassed an “unprecedented” weapons arsenal and was in the final stages of operational planning when French authorities arrested him shortly after the Brussels attacks.

ISIS operatives in Europe linked with Zerkani have also relied on other members of the Zerkani network as they sought to evade European authorities and plan future attacks. After the Paris attacks, Salah Abdeslam contacted Abid Aberkan, the nephew of Fatima Aberkan, who has been described as the “mother” of the Zerkani network. Abdeslam hid at the house of Aberkan’s mother, where he was eventually discovered and arrested.

The graphic also reveals the extensive overlap between the Paris and Brussels attack networks. Key individuals involved in providing logistical support for the Paris attacks rapidly transitioned to an operational role in Brussels. For instance, Naajim Laachraoui helped construct explosives for the Paris attacks before donning his own suicide vest in Brussels. Mohamed Belkaid, who was believed to have been in contact with several of the Paris attackers via phone, housed Salah Abdeslam while Abdeslam was on the run from Belgian authorities. Belkaid was likely involved in planning attacks with Abdeslam when Belkaid was killed by Belgian forces in a raid several days before the Brussels attacks. Mohamed Abrini is yet another individual who played a support role in Paris before mobilizing in Brussels; he rented an apartment that was used by several Paris attackers and later tried to plant a bomb at the Zaventem airport, though he failed to detonate his explosives. This pattern suggests that ISIS’s strategy in Europe involves building dual-purpose cells that can be converted from a support to attack role in order to maximize the utility of its network.

The U.S. has also had domestic terrorist networks in recent years, though they are not as robust as the European networks. For example, indictments and other publicly-available sources of information reveal a remarkably dense ISIS network clustered around the Minneapolis-St. Paul area. Almost every actor in this network is linked with one another.

As we talk about lone wolf terrorism, let’s not lose sight of the role that networks will continue to play, especially in this age of improved tradecraft.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify today. I look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.  
Mr. Mayer, you are up for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MATT A. MAYER**

Mr. MAYER. Chairman DeSantis, Chairman Meadows, Ranking Member Lynch, Ranking Member Connolly, thank you for having me here today to talk about this very important issue.

With more than 315 million Americans in the U.S. and our firm commitment to liberty, securing those people is among the most difficult activities of our domestic national security apparatus. The list of vulnerabilities across America are nearly endless, from malls to restaurants to businesses and to events. A determined terrorist merely has to acquire a means to so harm.

As we have seen over the past few years, that means can come in the form of a pressure cooker bomb in Boston, a semi-automatic pistol in Texas, a hatchet on the sidewalk in Queens, and a handgun in Orlando. The injuries and deaths from these attacks are tragic and senseless.

Because our domestic national security apparatus cannot stop every attack does not mean it should not stop some of the attacks. We will miss the terrorists who leave no trace of their plans before acting. We cannot miss the terrorists who provide clues about their intent and state of mind before acting. The fact that the FBI had investigated Omar Mateen several times indicates something went wrong.

We may not get every investigation right, but we can make sure our policies give our domestic national security apparatus the greatest chance to detect and stop the terrorists before they act.

As noted in June, the FBI, with roughly 13,000 agents, doesn't have the resources to adequately cover more than 1,000 active probes and the tens of thousands of tips it receives every year. The FBI, however, is not alone. Standing next to those 13,000 agents are more than 1.1 million badged local law enforcement officers ready to lend a hand at a moment's notice.

If we want to increase our chances against lone wolf and small cell terrorists, we must more fully leverage the men and women in local law enforcement. First, the FBI and other Federal law enforcement entities must do a better job of sharing information and intelligence with local law enforcement. To succeed at detecting and stopping terrorist attacks, our Federal and local law enforcement entities must be bolted together firmly to ensure all resources available are marshaled, leveraged, and synchronized.

I respectfully suggest that the ideal locations to bring Federal and local players together are the joint terrorism task forces located in most major U.S. cities. Other information and intelligence-sharing initiatives operating separately from the JTTFs only increase the odds that key terrorism data do not get shared or inadvertently do not make it into a JTTF investigation.

Next, Federal terrorism funds must be directed to support human intelligence operations by local law enforcement in key locations. With the substantial increase in terrorists' use of encrypted technology, the ability of our domestic national security apparatus to use signals intelligence to detect terrorists is diminishing.

To overcome this challenge, local law enforcement should increase the use of HUMINT, monitoring, surveillance, and undercover work to identify terrorist plots and cells. This work should be done in accordance with procedures erected to protect civil liberties and in partnership with the FBI.

In conjunction with the use of HUMINT, local law enforcement must counterbalance that hard power by deploying more soft power as well. Last month I outlined the development of regional outreach groups in at least 24 jurisdictions across America. ROGs will bring together law enforcement entities and Muslim community groups and mosque leaders to strengthen connections and build trust. It is vital that ROGs are led by local law enforcement entities and not Federal entities.

Finally, given the enormous resources, personnel, experience, and relationships existing in States and localities, it is time those entities had permanent seats at the National Security Council. By giving governors, mayors, and local law enforcement permanent seats, we can ensure that our domestic national security policy maximizes the resources they have to contribute and properly represents the equities, concerns, and inputs.

For too many years, Federal entities have served as gatekeepers of State and local injects into national policymaking. Under our tripartite system of government, States and local governments deserve their own representative voices in Washington, D.C.

Instead of reacting to what happened in the past, Congress should preemptively enact reforms that address what we imagine will be elements of future attacks. By strengthening the relationship between components of our domestic national security apparatus, we can inject fidelity into the system. By broadening the use of human intelligence by local law enforcement, we can insert nimbleness and certainty into the system. By deepening connections and trust among local law enforcement and the Muslim diaspora, we can inoculate our communities from the virus spread by radical Islamic groups. By leveraging the expertise residing in communities across America in the development of our national domestic security policy, we can boost the odds that we adopt policies that actually work.

Whether we like it or not, the use of terrorism by those who hate us or seek to use conflict with us to rally adherence to their warped cause will be a constant bedfellow for us in the decades to come. We may or may not be able to change hearts and minds in the Middle East, but we certainly can put in place policies here that protect Americans from the worst emanations of our enemies. When it comes to protecting our cities and the people therein, local law enforcement must play a more prominent role.

On Saturday, I leave for Europe to get briefings from the major security groups in London, Paris, Brussels, The Hague, and Stuttgart. I would be happy to come back to brief members and staff on those findings once we have them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and answer any questions you may have.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Mayer follows:]



Statement before the Joint Committee of the  
Subcommittee on National Security and Subcommittee on Government Operations  
On Radicalization in the US and the Rise of Terrorism

## **Our Ability to Detect and to Stop Lone Wolf and Small Cell Terrorists Will Depend on Enhancing the Role of Local Law Enforcement**

**Matt A. Mayer**  
Visiting Fellow

September 14, 2016

My name is Matt A. Mayer. I am a visiting fellow for national security issues at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of the American Enterprise Institute.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the joint committee today. In lieu of restating the research I've done over the past decade and in my book *Homeland Security and Federalism: Protecting America from Outside the Beltway*, I would respectfully direct you to my page on the American Enterprise Institute website (<https://www.aei.org/scholar/matt-a-mayer/>), where you can read the various reports I've written on this hearing's topic.

I'd rather spend my brief time with you framing the challenges that remain with radicalization in the US and the rise of terrorism, especially as it relates to homegrown violent extremists inspired, enabled, or directed by terrorist groups.

With more than 315 million people in the US and our firm commitment to liberty, securing those people is among the most difficult activities our domestic national security apparatus engages in. The list of vulnerabilities across America is nearly endless. From malls to restaurants to businesses to events, a determined terrorist merely has to acquire a means to sow harm.

As we have seen over the past few years, that means can come in the form of pressure cooker bombs at the Boston Marathon, a semiautomatic pistol at a Texas military base, a hatchet on a sidewalk in Queens, or a rifle and handgun in an Orlando nightclub. The injuries and deaths from any terrorist attack are tragic and senseless.

As security experts have noted since the September 11, 2001, terrorist attack, America will remain a top target of terrorist groups and their adherents. Likewise, our domestic national security apparatus will not be able to detect and stop every attack. Perfect security, if possible, can occur only in a totalitarian regime in which freedom is nonexistent. Americans fully understand the price of freedom is living in a risk-inherent society.

Because our domestic national security apparatus cannot stop every attack, however, does not mean it should not stop attacks by terrorists of whom it has knowledge. We will miss the terrorists who leave no trace of their plans before acting. We cannot miss the terrorists who provide clues about their intent or states of mind before acting. The fact that the FBI had investigated and interviewed Omar Mateen several times indicates something went wrong.

No matter how hard federal, state, and local law enforcement tries, it is often policy failures that result in terrorists evading detection and launching attacks. Consider this: had federal policy been in place that would have alerted the FBI of Mateen's purchase of weapons, the FBI could have questioned the storeowner, resumed surveillance of Mateen, and possibly secured a warrant to search his home and computer. Based on news reports, the result of such a search would have led to Mateen's arrest, and his attack would have been thwarted.

Both sides can debate the constitutional questions surrounding weapons bans and list purchase prohibitions, but a policy in which a simple alert is generated when someone who has been under investigation buys a gun could have prevented the Orlando terrorist attack without infringing a core constitutional right. Do we really need to debate whether such a common-sense approach is a constitutionally safe way to balance our security and liberty?

We may not get every investigation right, but we can make sure our policies give our domestic national security apparatus the greatest chance to detect and stop terrorists before they act.

As noted in June, the FBI, with roughly 13,000 agents, doesn't have the resources to adequately cover more than 1,000 active probes and the tens of thousands of tips it receives every year. The

FBI is not alone, however. Standing next to those 13,000 agents are more than 1.1 million badged local law enforcement officers ready to lend a hand at a moment's notice.

If we want to increase our chances against lone wolf and small cell terrorists, we must more fully leverage the men and women in local law enforcement. I have written extensively over the past decade on several key reforms that would strengthen our domestic national security apparatus.

First, the FBI and other federal law enforcement entities must do a better job of sharing information and intelligence with local law enforcement. It appears that in both the Boston Marathon bombing and the Orlando nightclub mass shooting, the FBI failed to alert local law enforcement about investigations it had conducted of the terrorists. More broadly, information and intelligence sharing by federal law enforcement entities still is largely dependent on the individuals heading the respective offices.

To succeed at detecting and stopping terrorist attacks, our federal and local law enforcement entities must be bolted together firmly to ensure all resources available are marshalled, leveraged, and synchronized. I respectfully suggest the ideal locations to bring federal and local players together are the Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) located in most major US cities. Other information and intelligence-sharing initiatives operating separately from the JTTFs only increase the odds that key terrorism data do not get shared or inadvertently do not make it into a JTTF investigation.

Next, federal terrorism funds must be directed to support human intelligence (HUMINT) operations by local law enforcement in key locations. With the substantial increase in terrorists' use of encrypted technology, the ability of our domestic national security apparatus to use signals intelligence to detect terrorists is diminishing. As I proposed in early January, Congress should launch a commission to investigate and provide recommendations on how to evolve our domestic national security apparatus while also protecting our civil liberties. Our domestic national security apparatus faces a difficult challenge as terrorists and other criminals evolve their operations with technological changes.

To overcome this challenge, local law enforcement should increase the use of HUMINT—monitoring, surveillance, and undercover work—to identify terrorist plots and cells. This work should be done in accordance with procedures erected to protect civil liberties and in partnership with the FBI. The programs at the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the New York Police Department provide strong models on which to base this program.

In conjunction with the use of HUMINT, local law enforcement must counterbalance that hard power by deploying more soft power as well. Last month, I outlined the development of Regional Outreach Groups (ROGs) in at least 24 jurisdictions across America. ROGs will bring together law enforcement entities and Muslim community groups and mosque leaders to strengthen connections and build trust. It is vital that ROGs are led by local law enforcement entities and not federal entities. As with the HUMINT program, federal terrorism funds should support this vital work modeled on the LAPD's outreach program.

Finally, given the enormous resources—personnel, experience, and relationships—existing in states and localities, it is time those entities had permanent seats at the National Security Council. By giving governors, mayors, and local law enforcement permanent seats, we can ensure that our domestic national security policy maximizes the resources they have to contribute and properly represents their equities, concerns, and inputs. For too many years, federal entities have served as gatekeepers of state and local injects into national policymaking. Under our tripartite

system of sovereignty, state and local governments deserve their own representatives and voices in Washington, DC.

After a tragic national event, the urge by policymakers is to enact new legislation that deals with an element of the event. Terrorists inherently seek to exploit gaps and vulnerabilities. Policymakers and experts could spend their lives and the nation's treasury trying to close every gap and vulnerability. Such an approach is destined to fail and only curtail our freedom.

Instead of reacting to what happened in the past, Congress should preemptively enact reforms that address what we imagine will be elements of future attacks. By strengthening the relationship between the components of our domestic national security apparatus, we can inject fidelity into the system. By broadening the use of HUMINT by local law enforcement, we can insert nimbleness and uncertainty into the system. By deepening connections and trust among local law enforcement and the Muslim diaspora, we can inoculate our communities from the virus spread by radical Islamic groups. By leveraging the expertise residing in communities across America in the development of our domestic national security policy, we can boost the odds that we adopt policies that will actually work.

Whether we like it or not, the use of terrorism by those who hate us or seek to use conflict with us to rally adherents to their warped cause will be our constant bedfellow for decades to come. In June, a survey showed that 93 percent of young Iraqis regard the United States as their enemy. We may or may not be able to change hearts and minds in the Middle East, but we certainly can put in place policies here that protect Americans from the worst emanations of our enemies. When it comes to protecting our cities and the people therein, local law enforcement must play a more prominent role. Thank you for the opportunity to testify and answer any questions you may have.

The American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) educational organization and does not take institutional positions on any issues. The views expressed in this testimony are those of the author.

Mr. DESANTIS. Thank you.  
Mr. Inserra, you are up for 5 minutes.

#### STATEMENT OF DAVID INSERRA

Mr. INSERRA. Thank you. My name is David Inserra, and the views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Even before the attacks on Paris, San Bernardino, Brussels, Orlando, and Nice, there was plenty to suggest that the face of the global Islamist terrorist movement had come to look very different from what confronted the world over a decade ago. The list of what has changed is quite long, from ISIS getting its own state, to the much discussed role of social media and the Internet.

Now we must answer new questions, like how to handle terrorist travel in an age of refugees and foreign fighters, and so we must assess the current state of the Islamist threat facing the U.S. As part of my research I track Islamist terror plots and attacks against the U.S. homeland. Since 9/11, there have been 89 plots and attacks. That is a large enough data set for a credible trend analysis to tell us more about the character of the threat.

There are three trends that I would like to tell the committee about and then offer some thoughts on the way forward.

First, the frequency of the plots has dramatically increased. There have been 25 successful or interrupted terrorist plots in the U.S. since the start of 2015, as opposed to only a handful in both 2013 and 2014. As a result, the threat is getting deadlier. While we have had 11 successful Islamist terrorist plots since 9/11, 5 of those successful plots have occurred since the start of 2015, resulting in the greatest loss of life from Islamist terrorism on U.S. soil since 9/11 with 68 innocent victims.

Second, overwhelmingly these plots are emanating from the homefront. All 25 terrorist plots involve a homegrown element, and since 9/11, 78 out of 89 terrorist plots have involved a homegrown terrorist. And importantly, ISIS has become the dominant influencer by far. At least 21 out of the 25 plots contained affiliation with, support for, or inspiration from ISIS.

And the third trend I want to talk about is that the plots are becoming more dispersed across the U.S. and targeting a greater variety of targets. Looking at recent plots, 6 targeted military installations, 4 targeted law enforcement, 1 targeted a government building, 10 targeted public gatherings like malls, a beach, or bars, and 4 targeted religious buildings or schools.

In prior years, the military was the number one target, but lately these public mass gatherings of so-called soft targets have become the primary targets, and we have also seen an increase in attacks on law enforcement.

Similarly, in prior years, the plots were generally clustered in the New York to Washington, D.C., corridor, but in the last year and a half, the target cities have widely ranged from Houston to San Bernardino, and from Chicago to the Florida Keys.

These trends are clear: more threats, more from inside the United States, more related to ISIS, more dispersed, and, unfortunately, more successful and more deadly.

Given these trends, I would like to offer some thoughts on how we can stop these terrorists. At least 15 out of the 25 most recent plots were interdicted using sting-type law enforcement operations and confidential informants to unearth terrorist conspiracies. In 19 out of the 25, law enforcement investigations of some kind were instrumental in detecting and stopping these attacks, while 5 were successful and only 1 was stopped by security officers on the scene.

This trend leads to the conclusion that the U.S. has become and remains a relatively harder target for transnational terrorist operations than it was before 9/11. Yet we face a more active threat, an assessment that is confirmed by statements and reports by the FBI and the U.S. intelligence community.

Our greatest asset in preventing terrorism has been and must continue to be Federal, State, and local law enforcement, as well as our intelligence communities, armed with the tools, information, and resources they need. Since 9/11, the U.S. has taken important steps in this direction, but we must continue to improve and refine these tools.

This does not mean that our government can ignore our rights under the Constitution; every program and law must meet constitutional scrutiny. But this does mean that within the bounds of the Constitution, strong and proactive investigatory tools should be given to our security forces with careful oversight from all branches of government. In so doing, we can maximize both our security and our liberty, rather than trading one for the other.

I look forward to discussing this with you more in our questions. Thank you.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Inserra follows:]




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## CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY

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**“Staying Ahead of the Islamist Terrorist Threat:  
Assessing Future Domestic Counterterrorism Measures”**

**Testimony before  
Subcommittee on National Security  
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform  
United States House of Representatives**

**September 14, 2016**

**David Inserra**  
Policy Analyst , Homeland Security and Cyber Policy,  
Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy,  
The Heritage Foundation

My name is David Inserra, and I am the Policy Analyst for Homeland Security and Cyber Policy at the Kathryn and Shelby Cullom Davis Institute for National Security and Foreign Policy at The Heritage Foundation. The views I express in this testimony are my own and should not be construed as representing any official position of The Heritage Foundation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the committee today to address this vital subject 15 years after that fateful day in September 2001.

The best way to prevent more days like 9/11, San Bernardino, and Orlando, is to spend the days after the attack learning our lessons and preparing for what comes next—doing what we can to continue to keep this nation safe, free, and prosperous. In that respect, today’s hearing is well-timed and important. In my testimony, I would like to address: 1) the evolving nature of the domestic Islamist terrorist threat; 2) guidelines for evaluating future counterterrorism measures; and 3) the efficacy of some measures that have been proposed related to countering terrorist activities, including: the mode of

attack, the means of terrorist travel, and methods of terrorist radicalization.

Homeland security has been a particular Heritage research priority since 9/11. We produced the first major assessment of domestic security after 9/11 and co-authored, along with the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), a major study that was used to guide the reorganization of the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>1</sup> Over the past decade and a half, we have assembled a robust, talented, and dedicated research team. I have had the honor and privilege of working with that team and for almost five years now.

Heritage analysts have studied and written authoritatively on virtually every aspect of homeland security and homeland defense. The results of all our research are publicly available on the Heritage website at [www.heritage.org](http://www.heritage.org). We have collaborated over the years with the homeland security research community, including RAND, CSIS, the Aspen Institute, the Center for National Policy, the Hudson Institute, the George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute, and the Strategic

Studies Institute and Center for Strategic Leadership at the Army War College. Heritage analysts also serve on a variety of government advisory efforts, including study committees for the National Academies, the Department of Homeland Security's Homeland Security Advisory Council, and the Advisory Panel on Department of Defense Capabilities for Support of Civil Authorities. Our research programs are nonpartisan, dedicated to developing policy proposals that will best serve the nation.

Our views reflect not just our own research but consultation with counterterrorism professionals across the United States and around the world. In the last year, Heritage analysts have conferred with experts and officials from Somalia to India and from Australia to Germany.

I am particularly proud of The Heritage Foundation's long and substantive record of research on counterterrorism operation and combating Islamist influences. Among our most important reports were an assessment of the Administration's counterterrorism strategy in 2011; a global operational assessment of foreign fighters in 2016; and a study on combating Islamism worldwide in 2016.<sup>2</sup> This effort reflects the foundation's commitment to advancing public policies that enhance our security by thwarting terrorist travel; disrupting terrorist activities; encouraging economic growth by promoting the legitimate exchange of goods, peoples, services, and ideas among free nations; and fostering a free and open civil society—all at the same time.

#### **What's the State of the Threat?**

In the past year, Heritage has suggested Congress consider establishing another 9/11 Commission. A particular reason for that recommendation is that America no longer faces the terrorists of 9/11. Even before the attacks on Paris, San Bernardino, Brussels, Orlando, and Nice there was plenty to suggest the face of the global Islamist insurgency had come to look very different from what confronted the world over a decade ago. The list of what has changed is quite long, from ISIS getting its own state to the presence of al-Qaeda on the Internet. And now we must answer new questions—like how to handle terrorist travel in an age of refugees and foreign fighters.<sup>3</sup>

A challenge in assessing the face of modern terrorism is that it has many faces. ISIS is a case in point. Although ISIS has a global presence, it manifests itself in many different forms in different places.

In Iraq and Syria, as you well know, ISIS rules as virtually a state actor.

In parts of Western Europe, ISIS plugs into a standing, well-established extremist network which in part predates 9/11 and extends across several countries. In Belgium, for example, extremist roots go back to the 1990s when extremists helped organize material support for Groupe Islamique Armé, Algerian terrorists aiming to establish an Islamic state in Algeria. In recent years this has been supplemented by foreign fighters and extremists returning from the Middle East traveling to the region and plugging in to existing terrorist infrastructure.

Other parts of the world look very different.

In Trinidad, in the Caribbean, the ISIS cause has been adopted by local Islamist criminal cartels.

In India, small disparate groups and individuals claim to be acting in sympathy with the ISIS agenda.

In Afghanistan and Pakistan, splinter groups of the Taliban have used a declared affiliation to ISIS as means to demonstrate their independence.

In Indonesia and Malaysia, ISIS has tried to infiltrate, influence, transform, or supplant established Islamist groups with varying degrees of success.

In Australia, ISIS has tried to use foreign fighters from the country to reach back to extremist elements in Australia encourage and organize terrorist acts.

In Hong Kong, small self-radicalized groups of individuals have taken up the ISIS cause. In April 2015, for example, ISIS recruited Indonesian domestic helpers in Hong Kong

to help funnel foreign fighters into Syria/Iraq.

In parts of North Africa, established terrorist organizations have entered into formal partnership and coordination with ISIS. In places, such as Yemen and Libya, ISIS has attempted to build up its own presence.

The U.S. has a unique terrorist profile all of its own.

In part, my assessment of the threat to the U.S. is drawn from a database and timeline maintained by The Heritage Foundation that tracks known Islamist-related terrorist plots aimed at the United States since 9/11 according to publicly available records.<sup>4</sup> The list does not include activities that are merely linked to terrorism (such as traveling abroad to join a terrorist organization); each plot requires some threat directed at the U.S. homeland. Additionally, the primary motivation of the terror plot or attack must be a radical Islamist ideology, which supports the use of violence as a means to achieve long-run Islamist objectives such as imposing Islamic law, i.e., sharia.

Currently, foundation analysts have identified 89 plots between October 2001 and today. That is a large enough data set for credible trend analysis on the character of the threat. One of the clearest trends is that the threat profile in the U.S. has shifted significantly in the last half-decade.

First, the frequency of plots has dramatically increased. There have been 25 successful or interrupted terrorist plots in the U.S. since the start of 2015.

Second, plots overwhelmingly are emanating from the home front. Twenty-four out of 25 involved American nationals. All involved a homegrown element.

Third, ISIS has become the most dominant influencer—by far. At least 21 out of 25 contained affiliation/support for/inspiration from ISIS.

Fourth, the threat is getting deadlier. Five out of the 11 successful Islamist-related terrorist attacks have been in the last fourteen months, resulting in the greatest loss of life from Islamist terrorism on U.S. soil since 9/11.

The trends are clear—more threats, more from inside America, more related to ISIS, more deadly. This appears to be consistent with the trends we are seeing with material support activities as well.

Beyond these trends there remains, however, an admixture of plots—different attack modes, targets, levels of sophistication, geography, histories of radicalization, and types of individuals. For example, looking at recent plots: six targeted military installations; four targeted law enforcement; one targeted a government building; ten targeted public gatherings like malls, a beach, or bars; and four targeted religious buildings or schools.

Where in previous years plots were clustered in the New York-Washington, DC corridor, they are now more dispersed nationally. Overwhelmingly, terrorists plot attacks nearby their residence. There are not identifiable patterns of terrorist hot spots. Rather than evolving terror networks, operationalizing terrorist activities is occurring by individuals or in small groups with a variety of links to extremist individuals and groups, most but not always in their communities.

The distinction between “lone wolf” and other small groups organizing attacks I find unhelpful as an organizing principle for counterterrorism operations. There are few truly lone-wolf-type actors, akin to Theodore John Kaczynski (the Unabomber), a domestic terrorist who lived and operated virtually “off-the-grid” for two decades. Most terrorist attacks, including the most recent act in Orlando, involved contact with other individuals. Where there is contact and activity, there is a potential to appropriately use legitimate law enforcement and intelligence means to uncover terrorist conspiracies.

In summary, the modern American Islamist terrorist comes from a diverse and somewhat small group. The total number of plotters totaled about 200 individuals. Recent cases of material support for terrorist activity total probably about several hundred more (though admittedly it has been difficult to develop a definitive accurate number).

The role of the Internet and social networking is difficult to fully assess. Without question, these individuals use the digital platforms like many others interested in extremist content. Terrorists use the Internet just like the rest of us. We don’t see them inventing new uses; what they are doing in many cases is adapting practices pioneered in commerce,

politics, and entertainment. Terrorists use the Internet for a range of activities from fund raising, to propaganda, recruiting, intelligence gathering, surveillance, and operational planning. Like teenagers and criminals when they want to have a conversation that no one can hear, they move to encrypted technologies or the “dark” web, employing online sites, services, and databases that are not indexed by conventional web search engines and generally require special, though publically available, software to use.

But whether the Internet plays a significant or determinant role in radicalization and operationalizing terrorist intent is debatable and certainly varies from case to case.

The ambivalent role of social networks in fostering domestic terrorism reflects the trends seen in other countries. One key variable appears to be the extent of human networks on the ground where extremist social networks are prevalent. Where there is a human web to encourage, inspire and guide through the radicalization process, the impact of the Internet seems to very more powerful and influential. Where there is less of a supporting group of individuals the material appears to stimulate more interest than action.<sup>5</sup>

#### **What Works in Preventing Terrorist Acts?**

The Heritage Foundation database and timeline are also helpful in understanding what contributes to effectively interdicting potential terrorist attacks on the U.S. homeland. For example, in recent attacks we concluded that at least 15 out of 25 were interdicted by using “sting” type law enforcement operations to uncover terrorist conspiracies. In 19 out of 25, law enforcement investigations, including stings, were instrumental in detecting and stopping attacks.

This trend leads to the conclusion that the U.S. has become and remains a relatively harder target for transnational terrorist operations than it was before 9/11. Even with the dramatic rise of the global Islamist terrorist expansion and the proliferation of foreign fighter pipelines over the last half-decade, foundation analysts have not identified any organized ISIS-related elements traveling to the United States and organizing terrorist plots here.

Trends suggest that traditional law enforcement and intelligence counterterrorism methods, particularly where local, state, federal, and international partners

work well together and share information are the most reliable and consistent means to stop terrorist plots.

An assessment of the Heritage data is consistent with the findings of a congressionally directed assessment last year of the FBI’s performance on counterterrorism which had generally positive, albeit not wholly uncritical findings.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, where best practices and integrated effort are not achieved, as in the case of the findings of a House Homeland Security report last year on foreign fighters and terrorist travel, gaps are created.<sup>7</sup>

#### **Where Do We Go from Here?**

Trend analysis suggests a manner to examine the terrorist plots we face—and determine what additional measures might be taken or modified to better prepare U.S. law enforcement to preempt terrorist attacks. The question to be asked is: What does an attack like that which occurred in Orlando tell us about our understanding of the threat or the nature of countermeasures that we didn’t know before the attack? That is the right metric for determining if additional counterterrorism activities would be efficacious in addressing the dangers we are seeing.

No counterterrorism is risk free from the perspective of looking for the right combination of law enforcement and intelligence techniques where the effort is to continually seek to maximize the goals of increasing security, protecting individual freedom, and sustaining an open and prosperous society. Developing these measures requires deliberate, sober judgments—resisting the impulse to just do something.

From a countermeasure perspective, unquestionably the most effective terrorist countermeasures are those that stop the terrorists before they attack. When laymen debate counterterrorism they often fixate on the mode of attack (e.g., car bomb or a dirty bomb) and the target (e.g., a shopping mall or the Super Bowl). This rivets attention on a small percentage of terrorist activity—the part that looks different. The probability for interdicting terrorist activity is far greater by focusing on the high percentage of terrorist activity that looks the same, including terrorist travel, recruiting, planning, fund raising, logistics, operational planning, intelligence gathering, training, rehearsal, equipping, and

reconnaissance. All these preparatory steps to a terrorist attack (even by a lone wolf) are common to most of the terrorist plots seen in the U.S., although how these actual steps are taken will vary. The most effective counterterrorism and intelligence programs focus on identifying the persons associated with these activities.

With that perspective in mind, let us turn to three frequently raised proposed areas for additional countermeasures: the mode of attack, the means of terrorist travel, and the methods of terrorist radicalization.

**Mode of Attack.** Preventing terrorist access to weapons is often suggested as a means of reducing risk. Since the inception of the national homeland security enterprise, the guiding principle has been to adopt a risk-management approach—evaluating criticality, vulnerability, and threat to make a determination of what measures are most efficacious, efficient, and cost-effective.

Risk management is much more than just looking at vulnerably. In a free and open society of almost 320 million in a country the size of a continent, Americans face almost infinite vulnerabilities. That does not mean Americans face unlimited risk. Other factors also have to be considered. The odds of being killed in a terrorist attack have been calculated at about one in 22 million. That doesn't mean terrorism is not a threat. It is. Terrorists attack our humanity—not just humans. Terrorism is an attack on our society and must be taken seriously.

On the other hand, we don't make Americans more safe and secure by undermining their freedoms and liberty. Risk-management helps us plot the best course.

The use of weapons in terrorist attacks is a case in point. Guns, of course, are used in armed attacks (also called mass shootings). This is not a new tactic. Increasingly, since the horrific terrorist attack in Mumbai, India, in 2008 we have seen terror groups emulate versions of this tactic—most recently in the Paris terrorist attack in 2015, and in the U.S. in San Bernardino and Orlando. U.S. law enforcement should be preparing to take measures to respond to this kind of threat.<sup>8</sup> But guns, just like planes, fertilizers, pressure cookers, oxygen bottles, nails, and many other instruments of everyday life are used by many Americans for all kinds of reasons. The best

approach, as with all possible modes of terrorism is take a risk-managed approach.

The key measures currently used regarding firearms involve screening using various federal databases.<sup>9</sup> As the committee well knows, the Terrorism Screening Database (TSDB) is the official name for "Terrorist Watchlist" and is maintained by the FBI's Terrorist Screening Center (TSC). The TSDB is the U.S.'s central repository of foreign and domestic known and suspected terrorists. It receives names of international terrorists from the Terrorist Identities Datamart Environment (TIDE), which is maintained by the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC) in connection with the U.S. intelligence community and security agencies that have information on terrorists. It also receives data on domestic terrorists from the FBI.

To get on the TSDB, U.S. officials nominate an individual whom they have "reasonable suspicion" of being engaged in or aiding terrorist activities. There must also be a sufficient level of identifying information to include an individual on the list. The TSDB only includes information used to identify terrorists. The TSDB itself does not include classified information on terrorists regarding what they have done and how we have been tracking them. This classified information is maintained in the TIDE for foreign terrorists and the FBI for domestic terrorists.

From the TSDB, more specific lists are created for different purposes. For example the No Fly and Selectee lists are used to prevent individuals from travelling or for subjecting them to greater scrutiny. To be included on the No Fly or Selectee List additional evidence of their threat to aviation security and clear identifying information is needed above and beyond the reasonable suspicion standard.

Another list extracted from the TSDB is the Known and Appropriately Suspected, or KST, file. To be included on the KST file, clear identifying information is needed. The KST is queried by the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) that is used to check firearms purchases. Inclusion on the KST does not itself prevent a gun purchase, but flags the purchase for further review. The purchase is allowed so long as the individual is not a felon, mentally ill, a fugitive from justice, an illegal immigrant, or prohibited from making gun purchases for another statutory reason.

If the system can be strengthened, it might well be better to focus on the person, rather than guns. Agencies might review the process of how they assess information, make determinations, and share data (such as investigative officials if an individual on the KST file applies to purchase a firearm). Such efforts might not deliver the satisfaction of congressional Members being able to declare “I voted to keep guns out of the hands of terrorists,” but it might add real value to the current system more effectively than trying to craft a ban not prone to abuse or legal challenges.

In addition, mass shootings in busy areas will always be a threat given America’s free society. A responsible measure would be to expand active shooter threat training across the country. Since state and local law enforcement officers will be the first to respond, training for active shooter events should be expanded through existing programs such as the Active Shooter Threat Training program and corresponding instructor training program.

Beyond that measure, ensuring the FBI more readily and regularly shares information with state and local law enforcement, treating state and local partners as critical actors in the fight against terrorism, remains vitally important. State, local, and private-sector partners must send and receive timely information from the FBI. Despite the lessons of 9/11 and other terrorist plots, the culture of the FBI continues to resist sharing information with state and local law enforcement.

**Means of Terrorist Travel.** General bans on international travel are also frequently suggested in the wake of terrorist attacks, whether or not an element of international travel was involved. While it makes perfect sense to develop policies, procedures, and tools to prevent terrorists from exploiting legal authorities for international travel, general bans on specific populations as a tool to prevent terrorist travel have not proven effective.

Studies of terrorist travel since 9/11 demonstrate that terrorists have sought to exploit every means of international travel, legal and illegal.<sup>10</sup> In addition, since known and suspected terrorists travel in such small numbers it is difficult, if not impossible, to identify a specific group to exclude from international travel that makes sense as a tool of effective counterterrorism.

Again, the best measures would focus on the individuals rather than classes of people. This is one of the potential advantages, for instance, of the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), which provides more relevant information on business and tourist travels than the visa process over larger numbers of travel, far more efficiently. VWP, if implemented correctly, can be a very effective tool for identifying prospective security risks, including known and suspected terrorists. The Visa Waiver Program provides a cost-effective and efficient means to capture more useful data on travelers in real time. The Administration should be a much stronger and effective steward of the program, ensuring that the information sharing provisions are rigorously enforced.<sup>11</sup>

Rather than look at new restrictions, the Administration and Congress might look to how it could practically move more countries under the VWP regime. In addition, Congress and the Administration must redouble their efforts to ensure the program is properly run and punish countries that are not complying.

From a larger perspective, integrating combatting terrorist travel within the larger context of the national counterterrorism effort is vital. The U.S. must maintain essential counterterrorism tools. Support for important investigative tools is essential to maintaining the security of the U.S. and combating terrorist threats. Legitimate government surveillance programs are also a vital component of U.S. national security and should be allowed to continue. The need for effective counterterrorism operations, however, does not relieve the government of its obligation to follow the law and respect individual privacy and liberty.

**Methods of Terrorist Radicalization.** One of the responses to the Orlando shooting has been a call to ramp up Countering Violent Extremism programs (CVE). While such programs are correct to focus on preventing terrorism, they face significant challenges. U.S. The size of the radicalized population in the United States attempting terrorist attacks is small. Individuals radicalize for different, often complex reasons. Law enforcement is generally better off targeting suspected individuals with traditional counterterrorism and law enforcement methods.

That said, the U.S. should not reject counter-radicalization programs out of hand. Programs

would have to be narrowly targeted, clearly defined, with clear goals and metrics of effectiveness and responsible oversight. Such efforts only warrant the attention of counterterrorism officials if the threat is a clear national security priority. Generic CVE programs make no sense. Islamist terrorism is the only form of terrorist threat today that rises to the level of a national security threat. Any program, if truly needed, should be limited to Islamist-related terrorist activity and focused on diminishing the threat of terrorist activity as defined by statute (as opposed to any other form of public activity or expression). Such programs should be focused to deal with particular threats as opposed to a general information campaign with appropriate review and sunset provisions to ensure the programs are used only as long as they effectively support law enforcement activity and are needed.<sup>12</sup>

More important efforts are community outreach programs as they remain a vital tool in helping communities deal with radicalizing individuals.. The U.S. should facilitate strong community outreach that empowers community policing and intelligence-

led policing practices. Such capabilities are key to building trust in local communities, especially in high-risk areas.

**Next Steps**

In light of the ongoing terrorist threat, the most important for this committee and Congress to remember is that just doing something won't make America safer. Doing the right thing will. That means improving and expanding information sharing arrangements with partners around the world as well as between local law enforcement and the federal government. Whenever Congress is considering counterterrorism policies , it must makes sure that the steps it takes improve our ability to detect, investigate, and stop terrorism before it strikes. And that is the best way to stay one step ahead of the enemy.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this important issue. I look forward to your questions.

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<sup>1</sup> L. Paul Bremer III and Edwin Meese III, "Defending the American Homeland: A Report of the Heritage Foundation Homeland Security Task Force" (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2002); James Jay Carafano, Ph.D. and David Heyman, "DHS 2.0: Rethinking the Department of Homeland Security" (Washington, D.C.: The Heritage Foundation, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> The Heritage Foundation Counterterrorism Task Force, "A Counterterrorism Strategy for the "Next Wave," Heritage Foundation *Special Report* No. 98, August 24, 2011, at

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<sup>3</sup> James Jay Carafano, "Why a New 9/11 Commission Is Needed," *The National Interest*, December 15, 2015 at <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-new-9-11-commission-needed-14731>.

<sup>4</sup> Available at <http://dailysignal.com/1toppGf>. All the statistics provided below are drawn from an analysis of this data.

<sup>5</sup> James Jay Carafano, "Social Media and Terrorism," *The Cipher Brief*, October 15, 2015, at <https://thecipherbrief.com/article/social-media-and-terrorism>.

<sup>6</sup> Report of the Congressionally-directed 9/11 Review Commission, *The FBI: Protecting the Homeland in the 21st Century*, March 2015, <https://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/protecting-the-homeland-in-the-21st-century>.

<sup>7</sup> Homeland Security Committee, Final Report of the Task Force on Combating Terrorist and Foreign Fighter Travel, September 2015, at <https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/TaskForceFinalReport.pdf>.

<sup>8</sup> James Jay Carafano, "Lessons from Mumbai: Assessing Armed Assault Threats to the United States," Heritage Foundation *Background* No. 2219, December 10, 2008, at <http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/2008/12/lessons-from-mumbai-assessing-armed-assault-threats-to-the-united-states>.

<sup>9</sup> David Inserra, "The Terrorist Watch List, Explained," *The Daily Signal*, June 14, 2016, <http://dailysignal.com/2016/06/14/the-terrorist-watchlist-explained/>.

<sup>10</sup> James Jay Carafano, "How To Stop Terrorist Travel," *Forbes*, November 23, 2015 at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/jamescarafano/2015/11/23/how-to-stop-terrorist-travel/#17031d0a36a0>.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, comments on the recent GAO report on VWP at <http://dailysignal.com/2016/06/16/visa-waiver-program-shortcomings-and-successes/>

<sup>12</sup> David Inserra and Robin Simcox, "How to Turn Countering Violent Extremism Into Combating Islamist Terrorism," *The Daily Signal*, July 8, 2016, <http://dailysignal.com/2016/07/08/how-to-turn-countering-violent-extremism-into-combating-islamist-terrorism/>.

Mr. DESANTIS. I thank the gentleman.  
The chair now recognizes Mr. Cohen for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF RICHARD COHEN**

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is an honor to have the opportunity to testify before the subcommittees this afternoon.

9/11 was the Pearl Harbor of our time. The anniversary that we just commemorated of that horrible day serves as a reminder of the continuing threat of terrorism associated with radical forms of Islam. But as members of these subcommittees know well, our country faces deadly threats from those blinded by racial and ethnic hatred, as well as rage at our government. Because the 9/11 attacks were so unexpected, so spectacular, and so deadly, however, these latter threats have not always been given the attention they deserve in the years since 9/11.

The clearest example of this point comes from the history of the Domestic Terrorism Task Force the Justice Department established after the deadly Oklahoma City bombing. The task force was scheduled to have one of its monthly regular meetings on 9/11. But not only was that meeting cancelled, the task force didn't meet again for 13 years as the threat associated with groups like Al Qaeda came to dominate the government's attention.

During this period, the number of hate and conspiracy-minded antigovernment groups skyrocketed, and the level of violence from the radical right increased by a factor of four. By 2014, State and local law enforcement agencies were actually more likely to see antigovernment extremism as a threat than extremism connected with Al Qaeda or like-minded terrorist organizations.

For the last 8 years, President Obama has been a lightning rod for the radical right. He reflects our country's changing diversity and has been a target of the backlash to that change. The day after he was first elected, Stormfront, the world's leading neo-Nazi Web site, whose members have committed numerous murders, reported that it was getting six times its normal traffic.

Yet, when DHS released a report assessing the likely backlash to the election of our first Black President, the reaction from groups like the American Legion and Members of Congress was so fierce that the report was withdrawn and the DHS unit that produced the report was allowed to wither.

In 2014, the Justice Department finally revised the Domestic Terrorism Task Force after a White supremacist, Glenn Miller, killed three people in Overland Park, Kansas, who he thought were Jewish.

But still there are indications that the threat of terrorism associated with groups like ISIS dominates the government's thinking. The Oklahoma City bombing was the first terrorist incident that President Obama mentioned in his speech at the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism in 2015, but it was virtually the only mention of terrorism from the radical right during the entire summit.

On June 17, 2015, Dylann Roof, a young man who appears to have been radicalized entirely online in the echo chambers of the radical right, killed nine people in an historic African American church in Charleston, South Carolina. Yet, 2 weeks after the mas-

sacre, the House Homeland Security Committee released a terror threat snapshot that didn't mention the church killings.

Congress has held multiple hearings, as it should, on the threat of terrorism associated with groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda, but neither the House nor the Senate has held hearings recently on the threat of terrorism from the radical right. Nor have the House or Senate held hearings on the threat of terrorism directed at law enforcement officials by antigovernment zealots such as the Bundys.

By focusing exclusively on Muslim American communities, CVE, or countering violent extremism programs, not only ignore potential threats from other communities, they often fray the bonds of trust between law enforcement and the Muslim American communities that are so essential to effective law enforcement. The nature of many of the CVE programs exacerbates this tension.

Again, the threat of extremist violence from groups and individuals associated with or inspired by ISIS is perhaps the most significant one that we face, but it is not the only threat that merits the full measure of our attention.

Terrorism from the radical right has been with us since the days of the Ku Klux Klan, which was born after the Civil War. In recent years it has been driven by a backlash to our country's changing demographics and rage at our own government. As our country's diversity continues to increase, the forces that propel terror from the radical right are likely to increase as well.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Prepared statement of Mr. Cohen follows:]

**Testimony of J. Richard Cohen**  
**President, Southern Poverty Law Center**  
**before the**  
**Subcommittees on National Security and Government Operations**  
**Committee on Oversight and Government Reform**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**

**Radicalization in the U.S and the Rise of Terrorism**  
**September 14, 2016**

My name is Richard Cohen. I am an attorney and the president of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil rights organization founded in 1971. For more than three decades, we have been monitoring, issuing reports about, and training law enforcement officials on far-right extremist activity in the United States. I have served on the Department of Homeland Security's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group and have testified on terrorism issues before the House Committee on Homeland Security and the Senate Subcommittee on Oversight, Agency Action, Federal Rights and Federal Courts. I am honored to appear before you today.

I'd like to make three points this afternoon.

First, our country faces serious threats of terrorism associated with a variety of ideologies. Although the threat associated with radical or perverse forms of Islam may be the most serious, it is by no means the only threat that confronts our nation.

Second, we must ensure that the government's attention to the threat associated with radical forms of Islam does not cause it to fail to devote the resources necessary to combat extremism associated with other ideologies.

Third, we must recognize that stigmatizing Muslims will fray the bonds of trust between their communities and the police that are so essential to effective law enforcement.

**We Face Serious Threats of Terrorism Associated with a Variety of Ideologies**

9/11 was the Pearl Harbor of our time. The devastating attacks led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security and focused the nation's attention on the threat associated with radical or perverse forms of Islam. As the Obama Administration has emphasized, potential terrorism from those affiliated with or inspired by groups such as al Qaeda (and now ISIS) "represent[s] the preeminent threat to our country."<sup>1</sup> The June 12 attack that left 49 innocent souls dead at an Orlando gay bar is a grim reminder of this fact as well as the frequency with which the LGBT community is targeted for hate crimes.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* at 2, The White House, Aug. 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Haeyoun Park and Iaryna Mykhalysyn, "L.G.B.T. People Are More Likely to be Targets of Hate Crimes Than Any Other Minority Group," *The New York Times*, June 16, 2016, at [http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/16/us/hate-crimes-against-lgbt.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/06/16/us/hate-crimes-against-lgbt.html?_r=0).

As the members of the subcommittees know, however, our country faces serious threats from other sources as well. The death toll in our country from terrorism associated with radical forms of Islam since the start of 2001 has been far higher than that from the radical right; however, the number of homicidal incidents actually has been greater from the latter source. In a study released in March, the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism found that between 1990 and 2014, far-right domestic extremists were responsible for four times as many ideologically based homicidal incidents as extremists associated with al Qaeda and related movements.<sup>3</sup> During the 2005-2014 period, the ratio was 3-to-1. In a nationwide survey conducted in 2014 by Duke University's Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, state and local law enforcement agencies were more likely to see antigovernment extremism as a threat than extremism connected with al Qaeda or likeminded terrorist organizations.<sup>4</sup>

The number of hate groups – organizations that vilify entire groups of people based on their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, or some other characteristic and that may provide inspiration or justification for radical-right violence – nearly doubled during a 10-year span, from 457 in 1999 to 926 in 2008. This growth continued during the first two years of the Obama Administration, to a record 1,018 groups in 2011. In our view, the most important factor driving the increase has been a backlash against our country's changing demographics.

For many on the radical right, President Obama – our nation's first president of color – represents the kind of "change" they fear. The day after President Obama was first elected, Stormfront – a popular neo-Nazi web forum whose members have been responsible for many deadly attacks (see below) – reported that it was getting six times its normal traffic. "There are a lot of angry White people out there looking for answers," added the Stormfront publisher, a former Alabama Klan leader.<sup>5</sup>

To many on the radical right, President Obama is a Kenyan-born, secret Muslim – a fifth columnist. Many in the conservative mainstream, unfortunately, have contributed to this perception. Incendiary rhetoric in the political sphere is not without consequences. According to a 2012 study by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point,

[C]ontentious and conservative political environments as well as political empowerment are positively associated with the volume of [far right] violence; thus, it is not only feelings of deprivation that motivate those involved in far right violence, but also the sense of empowerment that emerges when the political system is perceived to be increasingly permissive to far right ideas.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> *Twenty-Five Years of Ideological Homicide Victimization in the United States of America*, Report to the Office of University Programs, Science and Technology Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, March 2016, at [http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START\\_CSTAB\\_ECDB\\_25YearsofIdeologicalHomicideVictimizationUS\\_March2016.pdf](http://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_CSTAB_ECDB_25YearsofIdeologicalHomicideVictimizationUS_March2016.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> *The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Police Strategies to Prevent Violent Extremism*, at 21, 63 Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Duke University, Jan. 2016. The authors note that the "survey was conducted in early 2014, so it is possible that police perceptions may have been impacted by events that have taken place since then." *Id.* at 21.

<sup>5</sup> Stormfront website, at <https://www.stormfront.org/forum/t521647/>.

<sup>6</sup> Arie Perliger, *Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America's Violent Far-Right* at 5, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Nov. 2012, at <http://www.ctc.usma.edu/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/ChallengersFromtheSidelines.pdf>.

Although the growth in the number of hate groups began before President Obama took office, his election did coincide with another phenomenon: the dramatic resurgence of a far-right antigovernment movement, a movement that has engaged in armed confrontations with law enforcement officials in recent years. This movement emerged in its current form during the 1990s in response to federal gun control measures and the deadly standoffs at Ruby Ridge and Waco. It comprises hundreds of armed militias and other organizations that typically subscribe to a hodgepodge of antigovernment conspiracy theories, including the belief that U.S. political and economic elites are part of international conspiracy to create a one-world government known as the “New World Order.” It also includes so-called “sovereign citizens,” who have committed a variety of violent acts and believe that they are exempt from federal and state laws.<sup>7</sup> Many of the beliefs prevalent in the antigovernment movement are rooted in the racist, anti-Semitic ideology that animated the Posse Comitatus (Latin for “power of the county”) in the 1970s.

In the 1990s, this movement produced numerous acts and plots of domestic terrorism targeting federal officials and facilities. These include a failed attempt to blow up an IRS building in Reno, Nevada, with an ammonium nitrate bomb; an arson attack on an IRS building in Colorado Springs; a planned invasion of Fort Hood in Texas to slaughter foreign troops that extremists believed to be stationed there; a plot to blow up the FBI’s fingerprint records center in West Virginia; and scores of others.<sup>8</sup> The deadliest, of course, was the 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, which killed 168 people and injured nearly 700.

As a result of law enforcement crackdowns and other factors, the radical antigovernment movement went into a steep decline after the Oklahoma City bombing and remained largely moribund until President Obama was elected. In 1996, we counted 858 conspiracy-minded antigovernment groups; in 2008, 149. But by 2012, we counted 1,360 such groups, an increase of more than 800 percent. Among the factors contributing to this surge has been the perception – one that surfaced even before President Obama was inaugurated – that his Administration would push gun control measures similar to the Brady Bill and the ban on assault weapons that were passed during the Clinton Administration.<sup>9</sup>

As the number of radical-right groups has increased in recent years, so has the level of violence. The 2012 study by West Point’s Combating Terrorism Center found that right-wing violence in the 2000-2011 period surpassed that of the 1990s by a factor of four.<sup>10</sup> In one plot, neo-Nazi Kevin Harpham hid a bomb packed with rat poison-coated fishing weights in a backpack along the route of the MLK Day Parade in Spokane in January 2011. Harpham rigged the bomb to

<sup>7</sup> “Sovereign Citizens: A Growing Domestic Threat to Law Enforcement,” FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin, Counterterrorism Analysis Section, September 2011, at <https://leb.fbi.gov/2011/september/sovereign-citizens-a-growing-domestic-threat-to-law-enforcement>.

<sup>8</sup> For a list of radical-right terrorist incidents since the Oklahoma City bombing, see *Terror from the Right*, Southern Poverty Law Center, at <https://www.splc.org/20100126/terror-right>.

<sup>9</sup> Brian Montopoli, “NRA Begins Push to Tarnish Obama on Guns,” CBS News.com, Sept. 23, 2008, at <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/nra-begins-push-to-tarnish-obama-on-guns/>; Donna Leinwand, “Record Number of Anti-Government Militias in USA,” *USA Today*, March 5, 2013, at <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/03/05/southern-poverty-law-center-militias-gun-control/1964411/>.

<sup>10</sup> Arie Perliger, *Challengers from the Sidelines: Understanding America’s Violent Far-Right* at 87, Combating Terrorism Center at West Point, Nov. 2012.

detonate with a remote car starter device he had in his pocket. When the suspicious backpack was spotted, the MLK parade was rerouted and a bomb squad deactivated the weapon.

The number of organized hate and radical antigovernment groups has declined in the last few years (to 892 and 998, respectively); however, the level of activity from both of these sectors has not significantly diminished. Much of the activity in the white supremacist sector has migrated to the web, where extremists can disseminate and absorb propaganda and connect with other extremists in relative anonymity. Since President Obama was elected, for example, the number of registered members on Stormfront, perhaps the most important neo-Nazi web forum in the world, has more than doubled and now stands at over 300,000. In addition to its registered members, the site attracts millions of visitors who are fed a steady stream of crude racist and anti-Semitic vitriol.

The level and threat of violence from the radical right also remains high, and much of it comes from “lone wolves” – persons who may be inspired by, or who justify their violence on the basis of, ideological extremism. Last year, we issued a study – *The Age of the Wolf* – that found that 46 of 63 domestic terror incidents (74%) culled from academic databases and our own research files over the previous six years were the work of a single person. Ninety percent were the work of no more than two people.<sup>11</sup> A 2014 DHS intelligence assessment noted a “spike within the past year in violence committed by militia extremists and lone offenders who hold violent anti-government beliefs.”<sup>12</sup> In February 2015, DHS warned of attacks by sovereign citizens, citing 24 acts of ideology-based violence, threats or plots (mostly against law enforcement targets) since 2010.<sup>13</sup> Antigovernment extremists have killed at least 10 law enforcement officers in recent years.

As we saw this summer, lone-wolf terrorism is not solely the province of white supremacists or those who adhere to radical forms of Islam. Micah Johnson, the heavily armed sniper who murdered five law enforcement officers in Dallas on July 7, had demonstrated on his Facebook page an affinity for three hate groups – the New Black Panther Party, the Nation of Islam and the Black Riders Liberation Party – that espouse black nationalism. Gavin Long, who killed three police officers and wounded three others in Baton Rouge on July 17, claimed membership in an obscure, African-American branch of the sovereign citizen movement.

Extremist websites serve as incubators and provide justification for violence. Our 2014 report on Stormfront showed that its registered users have committed numerous murders in recent years.<sup>14</sup> Norwegian terrorist Anders Behring Breivik, who slaughtered 77 people in 2011 because he thought they were enabling Muslim immigration, was the most deadly Stormfront user. Richard Poplawski, who killed three law enforcement officers in Pittsburgh in 2009, was another Stormfront poster.

Stormfront is merely one example of web forums that promote racial hatred. Frazier Glenn Miller, the former neo-Nazi leader who killed three people he mistook for Jews in Overland Park,

<sup>11</sup> *The Age of the Wolf*, Southern Poverty Law Center, Feb. 12, 2015, at <http://www.splcenter.org/lone-wolf>.

<sup>12</sup> *Domestic Violent Extremists Pose Increased Threat to Government Officials and Law Enforcement*, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, July 22, 2014.

<sup>13</sup> *Sovereign Citizen Extremist Ideology Will Drive Violence at Home, During Travel, and at Government Facilities*, Office of Intelligence and Analysis, Department of Homeland Security, Feb. 5, 2015.

<sup>14</sup> *White Homicide Worldwide*, Southern Poverty Law Center, April 16, 2014, at <http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/White-Homicide-Worldwide>.

Kansas, in 2014 regularly posted comments on Vanguard News Network, a forum with the slogan “No Jews. Just Right.” Racist and anti-Semitic threads can be found on many other sites, including mainstream forums like Reddit, which now has a community of crudely anti-black sites known as “the Chimpire.”

Dylann Roof, the alleged shooter in the June 17, 2015, massacre at the Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, South Carolina, represents the modern face of much domestic terrorism: the extremist who acts alone after being radicalized online. Roof had not been a member of a racist hate group. Instead, he appears to have been introduced to and indoctrinated into the world of white nationalism entirely online. In a 2,400-word manifesto, he described becoming “racially aware” in the echo chamber of white supremacist websites following the controversy over the death of Trayvon Martin in 2012. On the site of the racist Council of Conservative Citizens, he discovered demonizing propaganda about black-on-white crime. He wrote that he “saw the same things happening in England and France, and in all the other Western European countries,” then “found out about the Jewish problem.” As he was murdering his victims, Roof told them that black people were “taking over our country” and “rap[ing] our women.”

Roof, like Breivik, also reflects something else: the international nature of the white nationalist movement.<sup>15</sup> On his jacket, he wore the flags of the former apartheid regimes of South Africa and Rhodesia. Like his European counterparts, he believed that the white race is facing genocide. Thomas Mair, the alleged killer of British Parliament member Jo Cox, is another example. Our files contain documents reflecting that he purchased hate propaganda as well as manuals on making homemade bombs and pistols from the National Alliance, once the most influential U.S.-based hate group whose founder wrote the book that was the blueprint for the Oklahoma City bombing. Just as the United States has seen an increase in the number of hate groups in response to our country’s changing demographics, Europe has seen the rise of a powerful, far-right movement that rejects multiculturalism. In a 2013 speech to white nationalists in Britain and France, Jared Taylor, who later served as the spokesperson for the Council of Conservative Citizens following the Charleston massacre, put it this way: “The fight in Europe is exactly the same as ours.”

In the United States, a growing white nationalist movement goes by a new, sanitized name: the Alternative Right, or Alt-Right.<sup>16</sup> The term was coined by Richard Spencer, a young white nationalist leader who heads the National Policy Institute and is one of the leading voices of the Alt-Right. Spencer has called immigration a “kind of proxy war – and maybe a last stand – for white Americans.” He also has called for a “peaceful ethnic cleansing.” And he has rejected the American ideal of equality under the law, as stated within the Declaration of Independence, declaring instead that “all men are created unequal.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Morris Dees and J. Richard Cohen, “White Supremacists Without Borders,” *The New York Times*, June 22, 2015, at <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/22/opinion/white-supremacists-without-borders.html>.

<sup>16</sup> For a detailed description of the Alt-Right, see the Southern Poverty Law Center website, at <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/alternative-right>.

<sup>17</sup> Profile of Richard Bertrand Spencer, Southern Poverty Law Center, at <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/richard-bertrand-spencer-0>.

During the presidential campaign season, the Alt-Right has been energized and has gained a foothold in the mainstream as a result of inflammatory political rhetoric about immigration that reflects fears about the loss of white hegemony.<sup>18</sup> The anger within the movement is not likely to dissipate after the election; however, whether its energy is channeled into political activity or into violence after the election is impossible to know. In the wake of the Brexit vote to leave the European Union – a move overwhelmingly supported by older working class whites from post-industrial areas similar to our own Rust Belt – a wave of anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-minority hate crimes swept the country.<sup>19</sup> The presidential election in the United States, of course, is different than the Brexit vote. But it shares many of the same themes regarding immigration, multiculturalism and globalism.

I close this section with a discussion of something distinctly domestic: the terrorism in the West directed at the federal government by a movement of far-right groups and individuals united by their anger at the government and its management of public lands.

The potential for deadly violence from this movement was on vivid display in April 2014, when the U.S. Bureau of Land Management (BLM) attempted to confiscate cattle belonging to Cliven Bundy on federal land in Nevada. Bundy, who subscribes to beliefs rooted in the white supremacist doctrines of county supremacy (Posse Comitatus) and sovereign citizens, had refused to pay more than \$1 million in grazing federal fees and fines. Despite his lawlessness, hundreds of armed militiamen from across the country answered his call to come to his ranch and stand against the government. As the confrontation neared a climax, militia snipers lined hilltops and overpasses with rifles trained on federal agents, and Bundy stated, “We’re about ready to take the country over with force.”<sup>20</sup> Later that day, the government abandoned its effort to confiscate Bundy’s cattle.

During the confrontation and its immediate aftermath, Fox News’ Sean Hannity repeatedly trumpeted Bundy as a hero. Senator Dean Heller of Nevada called the Bundy family “patriots.”<sup>21</sup> Senator Ted Cruz appeared to put the blame on President Obama and the federal government for “using the jackboot of authoritarianism to come against the citizens.”<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Texas Gov. Rick Perry said he had “a problem with the federal government putting citizens in the position of having to feel like they have to use force to deal with their own government.”<sup>23</sup> Bundy also received

<sup>18</sup> David Weigel, “The ‘alt right’ finds a home inside the Republican convention,” *The Washington Post*, July 21, 2016, at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-alt-right-finds-a-home-inside-the-republican-convention/2016/07/21/5890518e-4f8c-11e6-aa14-e0c1087f7583\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/the-alt-right-finds-a-home-inside-the-republican-convention/2016/07/21/5890518e-4f8c-11e6-aa14-e0c1087f7583_story.html).

<sup>19</sup> Adam Lusher, “Racism unleashed: True extent of the ‘explosion of blatant hate’ that followed Brexit result revealed,” *The Independent*, July 28, 2016, at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/brexit-racism-uk-post-referendum-racism-hate-crime-eu-referendum-racism-unleashed-poland-racist-a7160786.html> (500 “racist incidents” documented in the month following the Brexit vote).

<sup>20</sup> Don Hernandez and Joseph Langdon, “Federal Rangers Face Off Against Armed Protesters in Nevada ‘Range War,’” *The Guardian*, April 13, 2014, at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/13/nevada-bundy-cattle-ranch-armed-protesters>.

<sup>21</sup> “A List of Cliven Bundy’s Supporters, Now That We Know He’s a Pro-Slavery Racist,” *The Wire*, April 24, 2014, at <http://www.thewire.com/politics/2014/04/a-list-of-cliven-bundys-supporters-now-that-we-know-hes-a-pro-slavery-racist/361154/>.

<sup>22</sup> Miranda Blue, “Ted Cruz: Bundy Ranch Standoff ‘Tragic Culmination’ of Obama’s ‘Jackboot of Authoritarianism,’” *Right Wing Watch*, April 23, 2014, at <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/ted-cruz-bundy-ranch-standoff-tragic-culmination-obamas-jackboot-authoritarianism>.

<sup>23</sup> *Id.*

support from the Constitutional Sheriffs and Peace Officers Association, an organization that claims the support of hundreds of sheriffs and promotes the doctrine that sheriffs should resist the enforcement of federal laws they consider to be unconstitutional.<sup>24</sup>

Two months later, two antigovernment zealots who had been at the Bundy ranch, Jerad and Amanda Miller, murdered two police officers in cold blood at a Las Vegas restaurant. Bundy supporters say the Millers had been asked to leave the ranch. But it should come as no surprise that they were attracted to the talk of violent rebellion. On the bodies of the dead police officers, they left the most recognizable emblem of the militia movement – the Gadsden “Don’t Tread on Me” flag – along with a swastika and note saying the revolution had begun. They went on to murder another man before being killed in a shootout with police.

Tense confrontations between federal officials and antigovernment activists erupted across the West in the 18 months following the standoff at the Bundy ranch. In June 2014, for example, two men pointed a handgun at a BLM worker in a marked federal vehicle while holding up a sign that said, “You need to die.”<sup>25</sup> Threats and assaults against national forest and rangeland employees rose sharply during this period, according to Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility. Incidents involving BLM personnel increased from 15 in 2014 to 28 in 2015; those involving U.S. Forest Service employees jumped from 97 to 155, after several years of declines.<sup>26</sup>

On January 2 of this year, Cliven Bundy’s sons Ammon and Ryan led a group of armed militia extremists who seized the headquarters building of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge in Oregon. The group demanded, among other things, that the federal government cede ownership of the 1.4 million-acre Malheur National Forest to local authorities. Bundy’s sons were eventually arrested on January 26 as they drove to a public meeting to discuss their demands. Riding with them was Robert “LaVoy” Finicum. After Finicum tried to drive through a roadblock, he was shot and killed by police as he reached for his pocket, apparently for a handgun.

Finicum’s death has since become a rallying cry for the movement. Seven hundred people attended his funeral in Utah, and by the end of April there had been more than 80 events in his honor across the country.<sup>27</sup> Days after the shooting, an article on the website of the Oath Keepers, a conspiracy-minded antigovernment group that claims 30,000 law enforcement officers, soldiers,

<sup>24</sup> Mark Potok and Ryan Lenz, “Line in the Sand,” *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, June 13, 2016, at <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/intelligence-report/2016/line-sand>.

<sup>25</sup> Matt Lee-Ashley, *Congress Should Confront the Rise of Violent Extremism on America’s Public Lands*, Center for American Progress, March 24, 2016, at <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/green/report/2016/03/24/133730/congress-should-confront-the-rise-of-violent-extremism-on-americas-public-lands/>.

See also: David Neiwert, “In Wake of Bundy Standoff, Utah BLM Wrangler Threatened By Armed Men in Pickup,” Hatewatch blog, Southern Poverty Law Center, May 8, 2014, at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2014/05/08/wake-bundy-standoff-utah-blm-wrangler-threatened-armed-men-pickup>.

<sup>26</sup> “Attacks Against Federal Range and Forest Workers on Rise,” Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, May 31, 2016, at <http://www.peer.org/news/news-releases/attacks-against-federal-range-and-forest-workers-on-rise.html>.

<sup>27</sup> “In the Aftermath of LaVoy Finicum’s Death, Growing Number of Rallies Push Martyrdom Narrative,” Hatewatch blog, Southern Poverty Law Center, at <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2016/05/03/aftermath-lavoy-finicums-death-growing-number-rallies-push-martyrdom-narrative>.

military veterans and others as members,<sup>28</sup> said, “We vow to continue on with LaVoy’s legacy; his sacrifice will not be in vain.”<sup>29</sup> In June, a Finicum associate who had been at the Bundy ranch and who leads a Utah militia group was charged with plotting to blow up a BLM cabin in Arizona.<sup>30</sup>

### **We Must Combat All Forms of Violent Extremism**

After the shock and horror of the 9/11 attacks, a dedicated, comprehensive and forceful response to the threat associated with radical forms of Islam, both here and abroad, was an absolute necessity. No one could possibly argue otherwise. The question we have raised at various points is whether threats from other forms of terrorism have been given the attention they require.

We have had reasons to be concerned. After the deadly Oklahoma City bombing on April 19, 1995, then-Attorney General Reno formed a special task force, the Domestic Terrorism Executive Committee, to coordinate the country’s response to the threat of domestic terrorism. The task force was scheduled to hold one of its monthly meetings on September 11, 2001, but did not do so for obvious reasons. But the task force did not miss just one meeting. As the country’s focus shifted to the new and devastating threat, the task force did not meet again for 13 years.

The shadow of 9/11 has not been the only factor leading to a reduced focus on other forms of terrorism. Partisan politics appear to have played a role as well. In April 2009, a DHS intelligence assessment intended for law enforcement officials, entitled *Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment*, was leaked to the news media.<sup>31</sup> Despite the report’s accuracy, then-DHS Secretary Janet Napolitano withdrew it following an outcry by those who claimed, falsely, that the report tarred conservatives as potential domestic terrorists. More significantly, the DHS unit responsible for the report was allowed to wither. In the wake of the controversy over the report, the *Washington Post* reported that DHS “cut the number of personnel studying domestic terrorism unrelated to Islam, canceled numerous state and local law enforcement briefings, and held up dissemination of nearly a dozen reports on extremist groups.”<sup>32</sup>

Daryl Johnson, the former DHS senior domestic terrorism analyst who was the principal author of the 2009 report, later stated, “through reckless neglect at nearly all levels of government, domestic terrorism not tied to Islam has become a cancer with no diagnosis or plan to address it.” There are, he said, hundreds of government analysts looking for threats associated with radical forms of Islam but “mere dozens” monitoring other forms of potential threats.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> For a fuller description of the Oath Keepers, see <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/individual/elmer-stewart-rhodes-0>.

<sup>29</sup> “Rest in Peace LaVoy,” Oath Keepers website, at <https://www.oathkeepers.org/rest-in-peace-lavoy/>

<sup>30</sup> “FBI: Utah Militia Leader Planned to Bomb US-Owned Cabin,” *The New York Times*, June 23, 2016, at <http://www.nytimes.com/aponline/2016/06/23/us/ap-us-ranching-standoff-utah-militia.html>.

<sup>31</sup> PDF on Southern Poverty Law Center website, at [http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/DOJ\\_rwextremism2009.pdf](http://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/downloads/resource/DOJ_rwextremism2009.pdf).

<sup>32</sup> “Homeland Security Department Curtails Home-Grown Terror Analysis,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2011, at [http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/homeland-security-department-curtails-home-grown-terror-analysis/2011/06/02/AGOEaDLH\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/homeland-security-department-curtails-home-grown-terror-analysis/2011/06/02/AGOEaDLH_story.html).

<sup>33</sup> “For Domestic Hate, Apply the Vigor and Strategy Used for Muslim Terror,” Daryl Johnson, *The New York Times*, June 24, 2015, at <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/24/charleston-and-the-threat-of-homegrown-hate-groups-for-domestic-hate-apply-the-vigor-and-strategy-used-for-muslim-terror>.

In 2010, the year after the DHS *Rightwing Extremism* report was withdrawn, I was asked to serve on Secretary Napolitano's Countering Violent Extremism Working Group.<sup>34</sup> At my request, one of my colleagues, a federally certified law enforcement trainer, was invited to serve as a subject matter expert for the Working Group. Neither of us had success in getting the group to focus on the threat of terrorism from the radical right.

Over the last two years, we have seen renewed attention to the threat of radical-right terrorism from the federal government. In 2014, for example, after white supremacist Frazier Glenn Miller killed three people he thought were Jewish in Overland Park, Kansas, Attorney General Holder reconstituted the domestic terrorism task force that Attorney General Reno originally established after the Oklahoma City bombing. More recently, Attorney General Lynch created a new position, the Domestic Terrorism Counsel within the Counterterrorism Section of the Justice Department's National Security Division, to better address domestic terrorism issues. Still, there are indications that the threat of radical-right terrorism may not be getting the attention it requires.

In February 2015, for example, when President Obama addressed the White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism, the first terrorist incident he mentioned was the Oklahoma City bombing. But the discussion that followed focused almost exclusively on the threat associated with radical forms of Islam. Similarly, last year – just two weeks after the Charleston massacre – the House Committee on Homeland Security released a Terror Threat Snapshot that contained no mention of Charleston or the threat of terror from the radical right.<sup>35</sup>

Hearings on the government's response to terrorism committed by ISIS or other groups or individuals who espouse a radical version of Islam are surely appropriate. But so are hearings on the government's response to other forms of terrorism, including that which poses a danger to federal employees, federal lands, and the public from the antigovernment terrorism we've seen rising in the West.

### **Stigmatizing the Muslim Community Undermines Trust**

Muslim-American communities have been vital in the effort to combat violent extremism.<sup>36</sup> As Michael Leiter, former director of the National Counterterrorism Center, said, “[W]e have to make quite clear that [Muslim] communities are part of the solution and not part of the problem.”<sup>37</sup> Yet, the reality is, the relationship between law enforcement and Muslim communities in America, which is so critical for effective law enforcement in the long run,<sup>38</sup> is often frayed.

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac\\_cve\\_working\\_group\\_recommendations.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/xlibrary/assets/hsac_cve_working_group_recommendations.pdf).

<sup>35</sup> [http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/documents/July%20Terror%20Threat%20Snapshot%20\\_0.pdf](http://homeland.house.gov/sites/homeland.house.gov/files/documents/July%20Terror%20Threat%20Snapshot%20_0.pdf).

<sup>36</sup> Kristina Cooke and Joseph Ax, “U.S. Officials Say American Muslims Do Report Extremist Threats,” Reuters, June 16, 2016, at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-florida-shooting-cooperation-idUSKCN0Z213U>.

<sup>37</sup> Michael Leiter, Testimony Before Committee on Homeland Security at 32, U.S. House of Representatives, at <https://homeland.house.gov/hearing/understanding-homeland-threat-landscape-considerations-112th-congress/>.

<sup>38</sup> *Report on the National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism* at 8, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice, 2015; *Understanding Community Policing: A Framework for Action* at vii, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, August 1994, at <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles/commpp.pdf>. (“Without trust between police and citizens, effective policing is impossible.”).

According to a recent study funded by the Justice Department and conducted by the Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security,<sup>39</sup> there are numerous factors behind the tension and mistrust. But they start with the Muslim community's perception – one based on fact – that a double standard is at work, that they are singled out for special community policing programs because law enforcement officials look at them with suspicion.

This sense of being unfairly targeted is magnified by the widespread belief – one also based on fact – that informants are being deployed in Muslim communities, particularly in their places of worship. It is exacerbated by the discrimination Muslims often experience in their daily lives, the scrutiny they experience at airports, and the vilification to which they are routinely subject in the media and entertainment industry. Furthermore, according to the Triangle Center study,

[V]irulent anti-Muslim bigotry has even infected our political process with 16 state legislatures enacting laws intending to ban legal application of Islamic principles in courts, some members of Congress calling into question the loyalty of Muslim American civil servants, and presidential candidates stating that a Muslim should not be able to serve in high office or that certain mosques should be closed. The trends have only been compounded in the aftermath of the Paris and San Bernardino attacks, which generated open public discussion about religious tests to determine admissibility of refugees, religion-based surveillance, and, of course, the proposal by one presidential candidate to temporarily bar foreign born Muslims from entering the United States.<sup>40</sup>

Incendiary anti-Muslim rhetoric can play into the hands of recruiters for ISIS and similar groups.<sup>41</sup>

The FBI's treatment of the Charleston and Orlando killings reflects an aspect of the double standard at work here. Within hours of the massacre at the gay nightclub in Orlando by a U.S.-born Muslim, the FBI labeled it terrorism. In the days following the Charleston attack last year, on the other hand, FBI Director James Comey said the killings of African-American churchgoers by a white supremacist was not an act of terror.<sup>42</sup> Both cases, however, fit the definition of terrorism under federal law,<sup>43</sup> as do the actions of the antigovernment militiamen at the Bundy ranch in 2014 and the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge earlier this year.

Since 9/11, we've seen three distinct spikes in hate crimes targeting Muslims and those perceived to be Muslims, another factor that contributes to the Muslim community's sense of

<sup>39</sup> *The Challenge and Promise of Using Community Police Strategies to Prevent Violent Extremism*, Triangle Center on Terrorism and Homeland Security, Duke University, January 2016.

<sup>40</sup> *Id.* at 23-24 (footnotes omitted).

<sup>41</sup> Liam Stack, "Qaeda Affiliate Uses Video of Donald Trump for Recruiting," *The New York Times*, Jan. 1 2016, at [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/02/world/africa/al-qaeda-uses-video-of-trump-for-recruiting.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/02/world/africa/al-qaeda-uses-video-of-trump-for-recruiting.html?_r=0).

<sup>42</sup> Andrew Husband, "FBI Director Says Charleston Shooting Not Terrorism," *Mediaite*, June 20, 2015, at <http://www.mediaite.com/tv/fbi-director-says-charleston-shooting-not-terrorism/>

<sup>43</sup> See 28 USC §2331.

alienation and one that may contribute to radicalization.<sup>44</sup> The first spike began immediately after the deadly attacks launched by al Qaeda that killed almost 3,000 innocent victims, including a number of Muslims. The FBI hate crime statistics for 2001 showed a 1,600 percent increase in anti-Muslim hate crime incidents in the United States – 481 incidents reported to the FBI, compared to 28 reported a year before.<sup>45</sup>

The second spike came in 2010 amid the heated rhetoric surrounding a proposed Islamic cultural center near the site of the World Trade Center attack – the so-called “ground-zero mosque.” The FBI statistics showed then a 50 percent rise in hate crimes targeting the Muslim community that year.<sup>46</sup>

The third apparent spike began in 2015, a year marked by the extremist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, and by the incendiary, anti-Muslim rhetoric in the presidential campaign. One Muslim-American organization reported that last year there were more attacks on mosques – vandalism, harassment and intimidation – than in any other year since it began tracking them. Most of the attacks occurred after the Nov. 13 terrorist attacks in Paris.<sup>47</sup>

Following 9/11, President George W. Bush delivered a series of speeches emphasizing that Muslims and Arabs are not our enemies.<sup>48</sup> “[O]ur war is against evil, not Islam. There are thousands of Muslims who proudly call themselves Americans, and they know what I know – that the Muslim faith is based upon peace and love and compassion.”<sup>49</sup> He also appeared publicly with imams and other Muslim leaders. At least in part because of his leadership, anti-Muslim hate crimes decreased in 2002 by about 67 percent – a remarkable drop. The lesson, of course, is that it matters what our leaders say from their bully pulpits.

<sup>44</sup> Triangle Center Study at 23; Jeff Guo, “Hating Muslims Plays Right Into the Islamic State’s Hands,” *The Washington Post*, Nov. 17, 2015, at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/11/17/isis-wants-you-to-hate-muslims/>.

<sup>45</sup> Because of limitations in the collection of data, these numbers vastly understate the problem; more than half of all hate crimes are never reported to police and many others are incorrectly categorized.

<sup>46</sup> “FBI: Dramatic Spike in Hate Crimes Targeting Muslims,” *Intelligence Report*, Southern Poverty Law Center, March 1, 2012.

<sup>47</sup> “Number of Incidents Targeting U.S. Mosques in 2015 Highest Ever Recorded,” Council on American-Islamic Relations,” December 17, 2015, at <https://www.cair.com/press-center/press-releases/13313-mosques-targeted.html>

<sup>48</sup> <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/ramadan/islam.html> (compilation of the “President’s Words: Respecting Islam”).

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman's time has expired.

The chair will recognize, if he wants, the ranking member of the Government Operations Subcommittee for his opening statement.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And let me echo what Mr. Cohen just said.

I think it is a great distortion for us to focus only on the threat from the radicalization within the Muslim community in this country or abroad. It begs the question of lax gun control laws. It begs the question of the lack of universal background checks. It begs the question of hate speech. It begs the question of incitement at the fringes of the right-wing media that has enabled and empowered people to believe that their prejudice, their racism, their anti-Semitism, their hatred is somehow vindicated, justified.

And if they are at the edge mentally? Timothy McVeigh in Oklahoma City, last time I checked, was not an Islamic radical. He blew up fellow Americans, including children. In my home State of Virginia, Virginia Tech, that tragedy did not involve somebody who was involved in radical Islam. He was a Korean American who was mentally ill. And until Orlando, he had the dubious record of having the single worst terrorist massacre, gun massacre, in American history. This coincided with the tragedy in Charleston at a Black church. That was a White supremacist.

So there is plenty of hate to go around. Radicalization is a broader concept than just one religion or one ethnicity, and sooner or later this Congress has to come to grips with that.

So I hope we broaden the dialogue, and I hope we take heed of Mr. Cohen's guidance, because I think we would be well served if we did.

With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes.

Mr. Mayer, does law enforcement need to change some of these prevention and investigative methods? If you look, Mateen had a lot of interaction with the FBI, and yet he ended up committing a devastating attack. The Tsarnaevs were on the radar. Nidal Hasan at Fort Hood was very much, should have been on the Army's radar for some of his behavior leading up to that devastating attack. So are these just things where nothing could have been done, or do we need to maybe change the investigative and prevention methods?

Mr. MAYER. I think we actually need to make some reforms. I mean, in those cases, the reporting thus far seems to indicate that there was a disconnect between the Federal law enforcement entities and State and local, that there was not a sharing of information and intelligence of what was going on related to those individuals, and that threats, in fact, had been in the communities.

Additionally, I think in my written testimony, I believe Mr. Cohen in his as well, talks about he had been removed from an investigation and therefore fell off of the list, so when he bought the guns there was no trigger. And I think that we should seriously consider where if you have been under investigation for this kind of violent extremism, that at least a red flag is risen that would allow law enforcement at the Federal, State, or local level to do fol-

low-up, determine if there is a new threat there, and if additional surveillance needs to be done in terms of human intelligence.

Because, again, as we get into this lone wolf and small cell environment, if we don't increase the amount of human intelligence work being done, and, again, do it in a way that protects civil liberties, it will make it extremely difficult in the age of encryption for us to make sure we can follow the threat all the way to the end. So I think there are some things we need to do differently, yes.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Inserra, stopping attacks before they occur is obviously what we want to do. Once people are here, it's very much more difficult. If someone's a U.S. citizen, you can't treat them the same as you would a foreign terrorist operating overseas.

What, in your analysis, if any, have you looked at things like terrorists travelling here? We have the Visa Waiver Program. This committee has done a lot of work on that. The fact of the matter is, if you are in Brussels or one of these places and you have a passport, a European passport, you are going to be able to come here. We have disputes about the refugee program and whether those people are vetted.

And so does part of the strategy involve identifying people who could create a risk and using our border security and other laws to prevent to be able to prevent them from even coming here in the first place?

Mr. INSERRA. Certainly. That certainly is part of the piece of the puzzle. But I will note that, as part of my testimony, most of the plots that we currently are facing homegrown plots. So we don't see too many people who are coming in through the Visa Waiver Program or other legal immigration flows, and very few of those folks have come radicalized with the intent to attack the United States, at least in the past several years. Most of the threat is from homegrown radicals. All of them, in fact, most recently have been, except for, I think, the wife of the—

Mr. DESANTIS. The San Bernardino attacker. She clearly. So, I mean, that is just an example. She is obviously somebody who was coming here intending to harm the United States. There was evidence, pretty available evidence, of her being a militant Islamist, and yet she kind of gets a rubber stamp to come here on a fiance visa.

Mr. INSERRA. Yes. It certainly speaks to the importance of getting intelligence from our local partners, from our international partners, because the more information we can get flowing, as Matt talked about, at the State and local level, that can help them with their investigations, but it is also important that we are getting information from our international partners. And that information has to be flowing, especially in today's interconnected world. We have to be getting that information from our international partners.

Mr. DESANTIS. Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, there does seem to be a trend, and this is not just in the United States. If you look in Western Europe, there is a much stronger homegrown threat than there was 10 years ago. We are seeing it here in the United States. And, yes, some people are natural born Americans. Some have immigrated here.

But why is this happening now? Is it because you see the rise of the Islamic State and that is inspiring more people? Or is there something else?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I think you have a confluence of a few different factors at play. One is, indeed, the rise of ISIS. We can see an explosion in homegrown jihadist cases since ISIS was able to capture territory in Iraq and Syria and declare itself a caliphate.

At the same time, the two factors I pointed to in my testimony, social media and encryption, both play a role. Social media allows much more interconnectedness. It can facilitate trajectories of radicalization across ideologies. And encryption has allowed much more robust networks to be at play.

I would point to two other things as well. One of them is I think that across Western states, including in the United States, there is a declining trust in government. A lot of ideologies, ranging from jihadism to sovereign citizens to extreme right or extreme left terrorism, profit from a situation where it seems that the government has a great disconnect from citizens.

We can certainly see these sentiments at play, and I think focusing on the question of how well is the U.S. Government doing institutionally, how much transparency does it have, how well is it seen as effective, is a very important question.

The final thing that I would point to is that across the Middle East and North Africa, we have a situation where multiple countries are experiencing great problems. That has helped to drive the refugee crisis that you point to. Looking at recent trends in violence in Europe, both jihadist violence and also far right violence, we can see how this human migration into Europe does have a clear nexus with some of the recent incidents.

Mr. DESANTIS. My time has expired. I now recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts for 5 minutes.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, again, thank you for your testimony to all the members of the panel.

One of our tasks in investigating radicalization is to look at the attacks and try to discern what motivated the individuals who conducted these attacks. And I want to point to the situation in Orlando where Omar Mateen killed 49 people at the Pulse nightclub, and I think he wounded about 53 others.

Now, the FBI had investigated him a few years prior. He had made some statements that his family had connections with Al Qaeda. He also made some statements, apparently, to witnesses that he had joined Hezbollah. So he was investigated in 2013 by the FBI.

Then, in 2014, he had some connections, some links to Moner Mohammad Abu-Salha, who was a suicide bomber, and he was an American. I think he went to the same mosque as Mr. Mateen, and so there were connections there. The FBI went back in again and did due diligence and investigated him again.

Then it seems like he dropped off the screen again, and we don't hear from him again until the attacks in 2016.

Now, he called, he made a couple of 911 calls. He said during the attacks that he pledged allegiance to ISIL. I think he called back

again and reiterated that. And he said himself at that moment that that is why he was doing that.

Now, under the rules of evidence—I know I have three attorneys here—under the Federal Rules of Evidence, when you have a statement from someone, a dying declaration—he certainly knew he was going to die. He was in a shootout with the police. He was completely surrounded. He had a lot of weapons, but he knew he was going to die. He again said that that is why he did it. It was in support of ISIL.

Now, under the Federal Rules of Evidence, we try to discern the evidence that is most reliable and we try to keep out the evidence that is least reliable. And under our rules, under the Federal Rules, we allow a dying declaration to come in because of its veracity. Well, not because of veracity, but that is in the mind of the person, and they know they are going to die, and so we give it enhanced credibility.

Now, despite all of that, the two investigations by the FBI, the connections with Abu-Salha, his own statements, the day after the attacks, I know that Attorney General Loretta Lynch and others said we are going to launch an investigation to find out why he did this. And I just wonder, I just wonder, are we purposely looking away from this issue sometimes because of the sensibilities involved?

Let me turn it around. What would lead me to believe that with all that evidence and his own statements, the dying declaration, what would lead me to believe that that was not the reason that he took that action and attacked those people in Orlando?

Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, have a crack at it.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. I don't think there is anything that should lead you to believe that that didn't represent his intention. There of course was some rather salacious gossip that came out afterwards about him possibly being a closeted gay. I put it that way because he by all accounts was highly homophobic, and so there is the cognitive dissonance argument. But none of that evidence has really stacked up, and the FBI has said publicly that they believe that it was highly exaggerated. His previous time in the Pulse nightclub seems to be consistent with him casing the nightclub.

I think we do tend to be very trepidacious about attributing any sort of causal power to ideology. That is true within this field of study as a whole. And I think it is a trepidation that doesn't necessarily match with how people are actually motivated.

Mr. LYNCH. I was just wondering how we weigh the evidence.

Mr. Mayer.

Mr. MAYER. Yeah. I think oftentimes we don't want to see a cigar that is just a cigar. And for some reason that is good. We need to be cautious. We are in a horrible fight with a very determined enemy that doesn't play by any rules of civilization.

At the same time, I find it somewhat ironic that we don't take the same caution when it comes to other types of violence. We are very quick to then jump in and put a label on that even before there are facts, especially the Omar Mateen facts, none of those types of facts, but we will jump in rapidly and label those types of attacks.

So I think probably an ounce of caution is okay, but when the facts start to build, maybe we need just to call the cigar, the cigar.

Mr. LYNCH. Okay. My time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The chair now recognizes Mr. Meadows for 5 minutes.

Mr. MEADOWS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

So, Mr. Mayer, let me come to you. So you were saying that sometimes we will not label something what it really is. Why is that? Why do we not do that?

Mr. MAYER. One, I think there are the reasons where it makes sense where we have got to be careful before we cast judgment and make sure that the facts fit what it is we are going to say. But once they are there, we need to, I think, call it what it is.

Mr. MEADOWS. So do you see the radicalization of Islamic terrorism to be one of the key national security threats that we are facing today?

Mr. MAYER. Oh, I most certainly do. I have spent a decade writing about it.

Mr. MEADOWS. Is it the key? Is it the top priority that we need to be facing as it relates to terrorism?

Mr. MAYER. Oh, as it relates to terrorism, yeah, of course it is, yeah. I mean, we have got to first stop it at its source.

Mr. MEADOWS. The reason I ask is that Mr. Cohen seems to believe that radical right-wing groups are of equal concern.

Is that correct, Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. That is not what I testified to either in writing or here. I wouldn't argue with the point that the threat of terrorism—

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, you brought those up. So I guess the question, you were just saying that are we spending a disproportionate amount of time on radical Islamic extremists to the exclusion of right-wing extremists? Is that what you were saying?

Mr. COHEN. I think there is no question but that that is true.

Mr. MEADOWS. So, Mr. Cohen, if you are looking at that, is it not true that our law enforcement groups, the FBI, et cetera, they know how to deal with other extremist-type groups, that that is not a new phenomenon? Your group has been involved in that since the early 1970s. Isn't that correct?

Mr. COHEN. Since about 1980.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. So since 1980, your group has been involved in that. So this is not something new that law enforcement is having to figure out today. It is not changing radically in the way that they are radicalized, although they may use the Internet to give out information a little bit more, but it is not inherently different than what your group has addressed since the early 1980s. Is that correct?

Mr. COHEN. It is correct. And if I could just add one point. I think law enforcement has a great deal of expertise in these areas, but I also think that the record is clear that after 9/11 law enforcement took its eye off that ball.

Mr. MEADOWS. Well, I would disagree with you there.

Mr. COHEN. That would be fine.

Mr. MEADOWS. Because let me tell you what I found in talking to my law enforcement officers of both Democrats and Republicans,

sheriffs of both parties, is they understand how to go after the traditional threats. They have been well trained. They understand the investigative techniques. In fact, they can actually anticipate many times—obviously not all the times because of the horrific incident that you talked about in South Carolina where the gentleman was actually caught in my State. And so we understand how to do that. Law enforcement does that.

But what they are not prepared for is this new terrorism threat in their communities of which they are, honestly, we are having to do unbelievable training, but they still don't understand it, and so that is the reason for the hearing today. Does that make sense, Mr. Cohen?

Mr. COHEN. I understand what you are saying.

Mr. MEADOWS. Okay. And if I look at the numbers, I think the other thing that is troubling is that, I start to look at the numbers, the number one group that we have to be concerned about really with total attacks in the last 2 years was the Taliban first, in 2014 and 2015, then ISIS, or ISIL, and Boko Haram after that. So, I mean, if you look at the totals in terms of where we are at.

But here is the concern that I have.

Mr. MEADOWS. Mr. Mayer, in our inability to name it for what it is, because we call it violent extremism at times instead of violent Islamic extremism, and we do that many times trying not to attach a religion to it, but we miss the whole point of what some of that might be in terms of going after the real enemy, don't we, Mr. Mayer?

Mr. MAYER. I think we do. In addition to that, we also chill the, I think, interest, ability of everyday Americans then to kind of speak up when they think something may be missed because they have been taught that if they raise their voice—

Mr. MEADOWS. They are afraid to be either racist or whatever.

Mr. MAYER. Yeah, something like that. So I think that is without a doubt an issue we've got to address, because I know we saw in San Bernardino the neighbor did not raise concerns because they didn't want to be labeled. And as a result, there was not an opportunity to kind of go into that house and potentially see the stockpiles that were being put together.

Mr. MEADOWS. So your message to them today would be that if they see something that is of concern to them, even at the risk of being politically incorrect, they need to quietly reach out to their law enforcement agencies in the community if they see something that is of concern. Is that correct?

Mr. MAYER. I think that is correct. And, hopefully, the law enforcement community has done its job over the years to build relationships where they can do that in a soft-handed way that isn't going to essentially look like it's profiling or things like that. It's going to be responsible, it's going to be done discreetly. Sometimes people see things that aren't there, but we need to be vigilant, because that's one of our key elements of defense, domestically speaking.

Mr. MEADOWS. I thank the gentleman. I yield back.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

The gentlewoman is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you so much.

Good afternoon, gentlemen. Thank you for your testimony here. I wanted to talk with you all about not just radicalization, but the potential of once an individual may be radicalized, how to prevent terrorist attacks from those individuals.

We've learned in the most recent and historically deadly domestic terrorist attacks that in that instance the shooter, Omar Mateen, had at one time been listed on the FBI's terrorist watch list. And this has revived a debate here in Congress about proposals prohibiting individuals from those lists in purchasing weapons and particularly guns.

According to a CNN poll, 85 percent of Americans support banning people on Federal terrorism watch lists from buying firearms, and that includes 90 percent of Republican individuals in this country.

Mr. Cohen, it is so good to see you here. Our last meeting was in Alabama some time ago.

Mr. COHEN. On voting rights.

Ms. PLASKETT. Yes. And I wanted to ask you, what do those numbers say to you about U.S. opinions on efforts to prevent suspected terrorists from buying guns?

Mr. COHEN. Obviously, the issues that you raised are very, very serious ones. And I don't think that we at this point have a position on some of the measures that have been brought up in Congress.

One thing that Mr. Mayor said that I do think is worth considering, Mr. Mateen, of course, had been investigated twice by the FBI. It would have been possible to put a notation in the NICS system about that to alert the officers who had investigated him that he was buying a weapon.

Now, maybe that would have been arguably unfair, but it wouldn't have prevented him, but it could have, perhaps, if a law enforcement agent had suspected that, "Boy, that was a close call," it might have led him to renew the investigation and find something out that could have prevented those deaths.

Ms. PLASKETT. Mr. Mayer, I see you nodding your head in agreement on that.

Mr. MAYER. Well, sure, whenever anyone says they agree with what I have to say, I nod my head.

Ms. PLASKETT. I agree with that as well.

What you're talking about reminds me of a proposal, one of the amendments when the Senate took up this legislation, Senator Feinstein's amendment, which reflected legislation proposed in 2007 which would give the Attorney General the discretion to block a gun sale to a prospective buyer listed on a terrorist watch list; or uniquely, the measure would also require notification to the FBI if someone who had been on the terrorist watch list within the last 5 years was attempting or purchasing to buy a gun.

And that, Mr. Mayer, I understand is in your testimony what you call, I quote, "common sense" to require the FBI to be notified of those purchases.

Had this law been in place, the FBI would have been notified that Mr. Mateen was trying to buy a gun.

Mr. Mayer, do you have any additional thoughts on that?

Mr. MAYER. I think that is common sense. I mean, if you look at it this way, had the FBI gotten the alert that he had bought the gun—because I think you’ve got to be careful about saying prohibited from buying the gun, he hadn’t done anything wrong at that point, but buying the gun—they could have either themselves or through local law enforcement gone to the gun shop, asked questions—was there any type of nervousness, suspicious behavior, things that would have tinkled your bell?

Ms. PLASKETT. So they would have been able to revisit him, Mr. Mateen, having been on the watch list, if at least they had been pinged or notified that, hey, this individual has purchased a gun.

Mr. MAYER. Well, possibly not on the watch list, but just go talk to the gun store owner, and if there was enough evidence there, they then could have maybe started more surveillance, monitoring undercover, and then had enough evidence to go to a judge for a warrant inside the home, and then they could have done some different stuff.

So the point is it could have started a chain of events that could have prevented the Orlando massacre from happening had we had some type of system in place that didn’t stop a constitutional right for him to buy a gun, but at least notify law enforcement that somebody who had been under surveillance before was now engaging in a next step to potential violence.

Ms. PLASKETT. And, Mr. Gartenstein-Ross, would you agree as well?

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Yes, I do agree with that. And I’d point to another example as well, which is there’s a case in Little Rock in which a man named Carlos Bledsoe carried out an attack at a joint Army-Navy recruiting center. Prior to carrying out that attack, he had gone into a Walmart to purchase a .22. He did not use it in the attack. The reason he went into the Walmart to buy that gun was to see if he was on a watch list.

Now, there was no notification, but it was specifically part of his attack planning to buy that weapon. So it is another example of where it could have helped in terms of investigation.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you.

All of the examples and the testimony that you’re giving here, points that we can’t know for sure, but it’s possible that Senator Feinstein’s measure would have in some measure been able to help foil Mr. Mateen’s plan. Unfortunately, that amendment failed, as did amendments that have required background checks on practically all gun sales.

But what I can say at least is that the Senate at least attempted to have a discussion on this. They put it up for a measure and there was a vote. Unfortunately, here in the House we have not had that hearing, that debate, or that discussion or that vote, and we would desperately love to have that. And I believe that some of your testimony shows that that would be true as well.

Would you say so, Mr. Cohen.

Mr. COHEN. I would. And also I would say that there is a lot of misunderstanding about the Heller decision. It leaves plenty of room for reasonable measures relating to the sale and possession of firearms, and I think that point is not well understood, quite frankly.

Ms. PLASKETT. Thank you so much.

And thank you for the time, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentlelady's time has expired.

The chair recognizes Mr. Duncan for 5 minutes.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

A few months after 9/11, The Wall Street Journal had an editorial which said, when they noticed that almost every department and agency had submitted additional requests for money based on security, they said any time an agency requests more money for security we should give it twice the weight and four times the scrutiny.

And then, a year after 9/11, a Tennessee corporation, FedEx, told me they had spent \$200 million on security that they wouldn't have otherwise spent if 9/11 hadn't happened.

About that same time, when I was driving into work here one morning, I heard on NPR that 1 year after 9/11 we now had over 3,000 registered lobbyists on homeland security.

And then, a few years ago, I read this article by Ian Lustick, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania. He said: "Why is the war on terror so enormous, so all encompassing, and still expanding? The fundamental answer is that Al Qaeda's most important accomplishment was not to hijack our planes, but to hijack our political system.

"For a multitude of politicians, interest groups, professional associations, corporations, media organizations, universities, local and State governments, and Federal agency officials, the war on terror is now a major profit center, a funding bonanza, and a set of slogans and sound bites to be inserted into budget, project, grant, and contract proposals. For the country as a whole, however, it has become a maelstrom of waste."

Then, last year, CNN had this. It said: "Defending the country against terrorism—especially the apocalyptic variety practiced by ISIS—is expensive. How expensive? 'The answer is a lot and very hard to break out,' said Gordon Adams, a national security budget expert. Adams estimates that the U.S. spends at least \$100 billion a year on counterterrorism efforts."

And lastly, the Nieman Watchdog Web site at Harvard University estimated that we've spent over \$1 trillion on domestic security efforts since 9/11, and it said, quote: "For the counterterrorism spending since 9/11 to be fully justified, Homeland Security would have had to deter, prevent, foil, or protect against 1,667 Times Square-style attacks a year, or more than four attacks a day."

Now, I want to make clear, I'm not saying we shouldn't be spending any money, but I think we're spending much of our terrorism money in the wrong way. I can tell you, one former Member of Congress said we did everything we needed to do on the planes when we secured the cockpit doors. Yet we spend billions at the airports now, and we've got these air marshals that fly back and forth, back and forth, the easiest job in the Federal Government. There have been more air marshals arrested than arrests made by air marshals. I think they now spend, it comes out to over \$200 million per arrest.

And the big threats now are, I think, totally different. I think they come from cybersecurity. I think it would be much more dra-

matic, for instance, than the planes if somebody blew up a major college football game or a mall at Christmas or poisoned the water supply of a major city or something like that.

So I think that, number one, we're wasting an awful lot of money that, to me, could be spent in much more helpful ways, to get better housing for people or cure cancer or education or almost anything. And yet we are pouring it down this security rat hole just because everybody in Congress is scared to vote against anything that says security and all of us want to be as tough as possible.

But I also think that we need to use a little common sense on some of these things. I'm the only Republican left in Congress who voted against the war in Iraq. I think I am the only Republican who wants to close down Guantanamo because we're spending ridiculous amounts to keep Guantanamo open. So I look at things a little differently from most people, I guess.

I'm out of my time really, but if the chairman will allow it, I would be interested to hear comments about how we can more efficiently spend all this money that we are spending on security measures.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. Sir, I think it's a great question. I assume you want to go down the line.

Mr. DUNCAN. Yes.

Mr. DESANTIS. His time is—so if you want to go, and then I'm going to recognize Mr. Hice. So go ahead and say what you were going to say, but the time has expired. So then I'm going to recognize Mr. Hice after you finish your comment.

Mr. GARTENSTEIN-ROSS. All right.

So the last mass market book I wrote, "Bin Laden's Legacy," gets into at great detail a lot of wasteful spending that we've used in pursuing the war on terrorism. I also, as you can see in my truth and testimony form, do work for a company that is a contractor for the Federal Government, Valens Global, as does Ian Lustick, not for the same company, but the first person you quoted also works in that industry. Both of us have offered critiques from within the industry.

The main thing I would say is the way Federal Government tends to spend its money doesn't make any sense to me, right? It is not just Homeland Security spending, but every kind of spending that is done makes almost no sense. If it were private industry it would never be done that way.

Even when it is meant to save money, like lowest cost technically acceptable bids, we've seen bids where the difference between the winner and the loser was 3 cents. Now, any of us, if we were looking for a contractor to fix our HVAC system or to do our roof, we would never say, "Okay, honey, the problem is settled, this one wins by 3 cents," right? We'd start to look into quality.

Inherently, the government tends to make proposals cost a large amount of money. I've seen proposals that have cost millions or tens of millions of dollars for a contractor to put together. And when that's the system, of course the product is going to cost so much more.

I think looking at the process of acquisition, and then the second thing is monitoring and evaluation of what the benefit is that we're

getting, focusing on those two questions could help to produce a needed revolution in this area.

Mr. DUNCAN. Thank you.

Mr. DESANTIS. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Georgia for 5 minutes.

Mr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I really appreciate this hearing.

All of us understand deeply how serious the problem is, and the radicalization in homegrown terror is something that we have got to get on the front end of. So I appreciate each of you showing up.

Mr. Chairman, I would ask unanimous consent to enter a 2014 article from the Journal of Forensic Sciences entitled "Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists."

Mr. DESANTIS. Without objection.

Mr. HICE. Thank you very much.

This was actually co-written by Dr. John Horgan, who is a leading scholar at Georgia State University. And the reason I wanted to bring this article up, he traces—analyzes, I guess, is a better word—119 lone-actor terrorists, particularly leading up to events before the act that they committed. And some of the findings, I'm not going to go into a great deal of detail here, but I want to bring a couple of highlights out of this article that I found personally just to be astounding.

In 79 percent of these cases others were aware of the individual's commitment to a specific extreme ideology, almost 80 percent of the time. In 64 percent of the cases family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terror-related activity. And the reason is because the person verbally told them what they were going to do.

In 58 percent of the cases other individuals had specific information about this individual and their intentions prior to the act. And in nearly 60 percent of the cases, the offender actually made public statements.

I mean, when you get this kind of information, I would think that a study looking at 119 different actors, you can draw some pretty specific conclusions, and the information here to me was pretty startling.

I'm sure each of you are aware of the case in my area, the Tenth District of Georgia, Leon Nathan Davis was actually in prison for drug trafficking, and it was while there that he was converted to Islam. But when he got out of prison he was radicalized by online media and social media and that type of thing.

And, I mean, just like the studies that I just referenced by Dr. Horgan, Davis did similar things, he made public his intentions. And, fortunately, he was on his way to Turkey, from Atlanta to Turkey, and, fortunately, the Atlanta police, along with the FBI, intercepted, and he is today serving 15 years. We're grateful for that.

But I guess what keeps so many of us up at night is just the big, huge question mark: How many Davises are there out there that we're not catching? And we all know they're out there.

And I don't really know who to address this couple of questions, so I'm just going to kind of open it up to you, but if you would be

as brief as possible. But what can be done to continue to improve communications between Federal and local law enforcement as we're trying to capture these people?

Mr. MAYER. I think one of the things that we need to do is make sure that they are in the same room, and oftentimes they're not. We have created a system that we have a bifurcated system. We have a JTTF somewhere in a city and typically we have a State and local fusion center elsewhere, and they may be connected through intelligence pipelines or email, but they are not there physically together.

So I think to the degree that we can bolt them together, that will help us make sure that information and intelligence is populated across that room in order to ensure we give ourselves the greatest chance of detecting and stopping a potential attack.

Mr. HICE. Well, let me just throw this out one step further in this. What can we do to help in the whole communication between Federal and local communities so that when family and friends or others see stuff they go to the authorities rather than stay silent?

Mr. MAYER. Well, I think you have to build relationships. You have to create an environment where law enforcement can build relationships with the at-risk communities, because if they don't exist, there is going to be a lack of trust.

I mean, remember, many of the folks that are coming come from countries in which law enforcement is not a good thing. And so we've got to kind of tear down those historical mistrust notions and get to a point where they know that they can talk to law enforcement and it doesn't mean that their son is going to be thrown in jail or sent to Guantanamo Bay, it simply means they are going to create an off-ramp to get that person away from the radicalization pathway and elsewhere and back into the fold of the community.

So we have got to, I think, increase those relationships, which is why I put out the piece about a month ago on creating regional outreach groups all over the country, including in Atlanta.

Mr. HICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DESANTIS. The gentleman yields back.

I ask unanimous consent for a series of articles involving the Southern Poverty Law Center be placed into the record. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. DESANTIS. I'd like to thank the witnesses for attending today. And without further business, this hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:40 p.m., the subcommittees were adjourned.]



## **APPENDIX**

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MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



## PAPER

## PSYCHIATRY &amp; BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

Paul Gill,<sup>1</sup> Ph.D.; John Horgan,<sup>2</sup> Ph.D.; and Paige Deckert,<sup>3</sup> M.S., A.B.D.

## Bombing Alone: Tracing the Motivations and Antecedent Behaviors of Lone-Actor Terrorists<sup>\*,†,‡</sup>

**ABSTRACT:** This article analyzes the sociodemographic network characteristics and antecedent behaviors of 119 lone-actor terrorists. This marks a departure from existing analyses by largely focusing upon behavioral aspects of each offender. This article also examines whether lone-actor terrorists differ based on their ideologies or network connectivity. The analysis leads to seven conclusions. There was no uniform profile identified. In the time leading up to most lone-actor terrorist events, other people generally knew about the offender's grievance, extremist ideology, views, and/or intent to engage in violence. A wide range of activities and experiences preceded lone actors' plots or events. Many but not all lone-actor terrorists were socially isolated. Lone-actor terrorists regularly engaged in a detectable and observable range of activities with a wider pressure group, social movement, or terrorist organization. Lone-actor terrorist events were rarely sudden and impulsive. There were distinguishable behavioral differences between subgroups. The implications for policy conclude this article.

**KEYWORDS:** forensic science, terrorism, terrorist behavior, lone-actor terrorism, lone-wolf terrorism, typology, motivation

This article analyzes the sociodemographic network characteristics and antecedent behaviors of lone-actor terrorists leading up to their planning or conducting a terrorist event. Previous research has examined the strategic qualities of lone-actor terrorists (CTA, 2011), perceptions of the threat posed by lone actors (1), the narratives that promote lone-actor terrorist events (2), lone-actor terrorist attack characteristics and impacts (3), and individual case studies (for example [4–6]). This research marks a departure from that domain because it largely focuses upon behavioral aspects of each offender.

This paper also examines differences between subgroups of lone-actor terrorists. In the limited literature that currently exists, offenders tend to be depicted in a binary fashion: subjects either “are” or “are not” a lone-actor terrorist. Lone-actor terrorists are therefore typically treated in a homogeneous manner, an exception being Pantucci's (7) typology. Anecdotally, however, there are a number of easily distinguishable differences in lone-actor terror-

ists' characteristics, behaviors, and connectivity with other groups. Specifically, this article examines whether the characteristics and behaviors of lone-actor terrorists differ based on their ideologies, network connectivity, or level of operational success.

The questions explored in this study are the following:

- What, if any, demographic characteristics define lone actors?
- What ideologies are associated with lone-actor terrorist events?
- To what extent are close friends and family or wider networks of coconspirators typically aware of the lone-actor terrorist's intent to engage in terrorist-related offenses?
- To what extent are coconspirators typically involved in the planning stages of the offender's intended terrorism-related activities?
- How socially isolated do lone-actor terrorist offenders tend to be?
- Is there a significant difference between lone offenders and those who commit terrorism-related offenses on behalf of a group?
- Are there key life history events that may be relevant in understanding the development of lone actors?
- Are there differences between lone-actor terrorists based on their ideology or network connectivity?

### Method

#### Sample

The sample includes 119 individuals who engaged in or planned to engage in lone-actor terrorism within the United States and Europe and were convicted for their actions or died in the commissioning of their offense. For the purposes of this project, terrorism is defined as the use or threat of action where

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‡The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as necessarily representing the official policies, either expressed or implied, of the Department of Homeland Security or the Home Office.

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the use or threat is designed to influence the government or to intimidate the public or a section of the public, and/or the use or threat is made for the purpose of advancing a political, religious, or ideological cause. Terrorism can involve violence against a person, damage to property, endangering a person's life other than that of the person committing the action, creating a serious risk to the health or safety of the public or a section of the public, or facilitating any of the above actions. In addition to including individuals who actively planned and conducted violent attacks, our sample includes lone actors who engaged in nonviolent behaviors that facilitated or encouraged violent actions carried out by others or behaviors that intended to cause only structural damage. For example, some may prioritize causing infrastructural damage as in the case of isolated dyad Ellis Edward Hurst and Joseph Martin Bailie. Both men held grudges against tax authorities and planned to blow up a United States Internal Revenue Service building in December 1995. They decided to plan the detonation for a Sunday evening to ensure the building would be empty. Despite the 100lb IED failing to detonate due to a faulty fuse, the timing and delivery of the IED itself shows rational strategic thought on behalf of the perpetrators, who sought not to cause human injury but rather engage in an expressive act against a symbolic target. Other examples include Ryan Gibson Anderson and Kevin Gardner, who separately aimed to provide insider knowledge of U.S. and U.K. military capabilities and Army Camp weaknesses to wider terrorist networks.

The sample includes individual terrorists (with and without command and control links) and isolated dyads in our actor database. *Individual terrorists* operate autonomously and independently of a group (in terms of training, preparation, and target selection, etc.). In some cases, the individual may have radicalized toward violence within a wider group but left and engaged in illicit behaviors outside of a formal command and control structure. *Individual terrorists with command and control links* on the other hand are trained and equipped by a group—which may also choose their targets—but attempt to carry out their attacks autonomously. *Isolated dyads* include pairs of individuals who operate independently of a group. They may become radicalized to violence on their own (or one may have radicalized the other), and they conceive, develop, and carry out activities without direct input from a wider network. Although not technically “lone” actors, they are included for a number of reasons. First, a key component of this project focuses upon the network qualities of terrorists who are not members of terrorist groups. Second, an initial review of our cases showed that isolated dyads often formed when one individual recruited the other specifically for the terrorist attack. The formation of a dyad, in some cases, may be a function of the type of terrorist attack planned. Finally, by including these cases, it added to our sample, making the types of inferential statistics used later more applicable.

Prior to data collection, the authors examined the academic literature on lone-actor terrorism and built an actor dictionary, producing a list of names that fit the above criteria. Further names were also sourced through tailored search strings developed and applied to the LexisNexis “All English News” option. More individuals were also identified through the Global Terrorism Database developed by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START) and lists of those convicted of terrorism-related offenses in the United Kingdom and the United States. The decision was then made to limit the population to post-1990 events because a large component of our data would be coded from the LexisNexis archive which is

generally quite sparse before the 1990s. In total, 119 lone-actor terrorist offenders fit the specified geographical, temporal, and operational criteria.

#### *Data Collection and Analysis*

The codebook used in this project was developed based on a review of literature on individuals who commit a wide range of violent and nonviolent crimes, are victimized, and/or engage in high-risk behaviors as well as a review of other existing codebooks used in the construction of terrorism-related databases. The variables included in the codebook spanned sociodemographic information (age, gender, occupation, family characteristics, relationship status, occupation, employment, etc.), antecedent event behaviors (aspects of the individual's behaviors toward others and within their day-to-day routines), event-specific behaviors (attack methods, who was targeted), and post-event behaviors and experiences (claims of responsibility, arrest/conviction details, etc.).

The authors collected data on demographic and background characteristics and antecedent event behaviors by examining and coding information contained in open-source news reports, sworn affidavits, and when possible, openly available firsthand accounts. The vast majority of our sources came from tailored LexisNexis searches. The authors also analyzed relevant documents across online public record depositories such as documentcloud.org, biographies of five lone actors in our sample (Ted Kaczynski, Timothy McVeigh, David Copeland, Eric Rudolph and Bruce Ivins) and all available scholarly articles.

Each observation was coded by three independent coders. After an observation was coded, the results were reconciled in two stages (coder A with coder B, and then coders AB with C). In cases when three coders could not agree on particular variables, the project's postdoctoral research fellow resolved differences based on an examination of the original sources that the coders relied upon to make their assessments. Such decisions factored in the comparative reliability and quality of the sources (e.g., reports that cover trial proceedings vs. reports issued in the immediate aftermath of the event) and the sources cited in the report. Due to time constraints, no efforts were made to check the veracity of reporting against primary sources unless they were readily available online.

It is important to emphasize some limitations inherent in the sources used in this study. First, the sample only includes information on individuals who planned or conducted incidents reported in the media. It is possible incidents were missed that either (i) led to convictions but did not register any national media interest but may have been reported in local level sources not covered in the LexisNexis archives or (ii) were intercepted or disrupted by security forces without a conviction being made. Second, as the level of detail reported varied significantly across incidents, data collection was limited to what could reasonably be collected for each case. For example, Pennsylvania state police seized raw explosives and homemade IEDs in a 34-year-old man's home in Milesburg, PA in December 2011. This received no national coverage. Finally, it is often difficult to distinguish between missing data and variables that should be coded as a “no”. Given the nature of newspaper reporting, it is unrealistic to expect each biographically oriented story to contain lengthy passages that list each variable or behavior the offender did not conduct (e.g., the offender was not a substance abuser, a former convict, recently exposed to new media, etc.). For the descriptive analysis that follows, where possible, the authors report or

distinguish between missing data and "no" answers, but it should be kept in mind that the likely result is that "no" answers are substantially undercounted in the analysis. In the comparisons among lone actors based on their ideologies or network connectivity, each variable is treated in the analysis dichotomously (e.g., the response is either a "yes," or not enough information to suggest a yes). Unless otherwise stated, each of the below reported figures are of the whole sample (119 individuals).

Despite these limitations, open-source accounts can provide rich data. This has been demonstrated in other studies focusing upon the sociodemographic characteristics, operational behaviors and developmental pathways of members of formal terrorist organizations. While this study has a wider remit and includes nonincident-related behaviors, given the particularly low base rate of lone-actor terrorism, the volume of reporting tends to be much higher compared to campaigns of violence where trials and convictions are a weekly occurrence. For example, educational data are accountable for 65% of our lone-actor sample. This is compared to <10% of Gill and Horgan's (8) sample of Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) militants, for whom level of education could generally only be inferred from the individual's occupational status.

## Results

### Overall Characteristics and Behaviors

**Gender**—Our lone-actor terrorist sample is heavily male-oriented. In total, 96.6% are male and there are only four instances of females engaging in such behaviors. The figure of 3.4% being female closely resembles studies that focus upon membership profiles of terrorist organizations/networks. For example, women accounted for 4.9% of a sample of 1240 members of the PIRA (9), 2.7% of a sample of 222 dissident Irish Republicans (8), and 6.4% of Reinares' (10) sample of ETA members from 1970 to 1995. There is an ongoing debate about the nature of female recruitment and the roles women typically engage in within terrorist groups (11). Much of this debate concerns the relative degree to which women typically conduct behaviors that are supportive of and facilitate violence as opposed to actually committing front line violent activities. In terms of our female subset, there is also such a distinction. Two of the females in our sample committed violent acts. Roshonara Choudhry stabbed a Labour Party MP, Stephen Timms, in May 2010 in revenge for supporting the Iraq War and the subsequent deaths of innocent people within Iraq. Rachelle "Shelley" Shannon shot Dr. George Tiller (who was later assassinated by lone actor Scott Roeder) outside his abortion clinic in Kansas in 1993. Shannon was also found guilty on 30 counts of being connected to several arson attacks against a total of nine abortion clinics. The other two females engaged in facilitative behaviors. For example, Shella Roma was convicted in March 2009 of disseminating terrorist publications. She produced two versions of a leaflet entitled, *The Call*, which encouraged individuals to commit terrorist acts against Western forces. The intention was to distribute these leaflets both from her home and outside of particular mosques near her home in Oldham, England. Houria Chahed Chentouf was also convicted in 2009 in the United Kingdom for possessing documents likely to be useful for potential terrorists. She was stopped at Liverpool's John Lennon airport with USB stick containing more than 7000 files including instructions on how to set up training camps and manufacture IEDs as well as a list of potentially suitable targets. Investigators also later found

hand-written documents that suggested Chentouf was considering moving from facilitative to violent actions. The documents apparently considered whether she and her children should become suicide bombers (12).

**Age of First Terrorist Activity**—Figure 1 below examines the age at which offenders committed their first terrorism-related activity that led to a subsequent arrest and conviction unless the offender died in the course of the terrorist event itself. Offender's age ranged from 15 to 69, with a mean of 33, a mode of 22, and a standard deviation of 12. This average age is much older than studies that have focused upon Colombian militants—average age of 20 (13), the PIRA—average age of 25 (14), and finally al-Qaeda-related terrorists—average age of 26 (15). In fact, it is the second oldest sample of terrorists that the authors are aware of, behind a sample of contemporary dissident Irish republicans—average age of 35 (8). Many in the dissident sample had previously been members of PIRA, however, suggesting that their average age of first terrorist involvement would be younger.

Figure 1 compares the lone-actor data set with data on PIRA and the Basque separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA) in terms of the relative distribution of age groups. These groups were chosen because they are the sole studies with comparable and available data. The percentage of those over 30 years of age in our sample of lone actors is substantially larger than in the two other samples for which comparative figures are available. It is almost two and a half times larger than in the PIRA sample and more than eight times larger than in the ETA sample. The proportion of those under the age of 20 is also approximately four times smaller than in the ETA and PIRA samples. As depicted in Fig. 1, those between 21 and 23 years of age and those over 30 encompass more than 70% of the lone actors in the sample, suggesting that the onset of lone-actor engagement in terrorism has a different temporal trajectory than that of engaging in terrorism within formal groups.

**Relationship Status and Family Characteristics**—Of the 106 individuals for whom relationship status data were available, 50% were single individuals who had never married. A few (6.6%) were in relationships but had not yet married. Almost a quarter (24.5%) were married, and a further 18.9% had either separated from their spouse (3.8%) or were divorced (15.1%). The percentage of married individuals in this sample is lower than that associated with al-Qaeda-related terrorists (73%) (14), PIRA (41.6%) (13), and contemporary dissident republicans

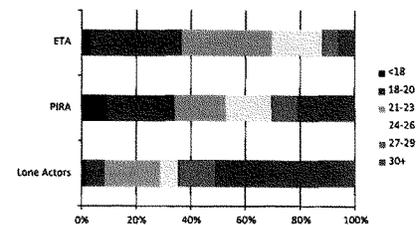


FIG. 1—Age when committing first terrorism-related offense that resulted in conviction.

(50%) (8), but higher than that associated with ETA (11.6%) (10) and Pakistani militants (14%) (16). Given the relatively older age of this sample, the marriage rates are low. When we consider the oft-cited finding that criminal offending decreases as individuals age due to biographical constraints such as marriage, it is also not surprising to find such a comparatively older sample to have a high proportion of unattached individuals.

Just more than a quarter (27.7%) had children, 34.5% were reported not to have children, and in 37.8% of cases, data on children were unreported. This figure is comparatively much lower than Gill and Horgan's (14) study of PIRA militants in which 41.4% had children, especially when we take into consideration that the lone-actor sample is a much older cohort of individuals.

Of the 65 observations on which parental relationship status was available, 47.7% were married, while the remainder were divorced (30.8%), separated (7.7%), widowed (7.7%), or never married (3.1%).

**Education**—This section outlines the distribution of educational achievement among members of the sample for which data were available (77 individuals). In total, approximately a quarter's (24.7%) highest educational achievement was either attending or completing high school or secondary education. A further 32.5% either attended a community college, trade school, or university undergraduate education without graduating. An additional 22.1% completed some form of community college, trade school, or university education and graduated. Another 20.8% participated in graduate school and either failed to graduate (6.5%), graduated with a master's degree (6.5%), or graduated with a doctoral degree (7.8%). In sum, there is a generally even distribution across the spectrum of educational achievement (depicted in Fig. 2).

**Employment**—Despite the generally high educational achievement among our cohort, this was not immediately apparent when viewing the types of employment they were in at the time of their terrorism-related activity. Employment data were available for 112 of the sample. Of these individuals, 40.2% were unemployed and a further 9.8% were still students. The other half of the sample were employed but mainly concentrated within the service industry (23.2%). Much smaller percentages were in professional occupations (10.7%), construction (4.5%), clerical/administrative/sales positions (4.5%), and agriculture (1.8%). These figures are largely different from the studies cited earlier on PIRA and ETA as well as Horgan and Morrison's (17) study of dissident republicans particularly in terms of those

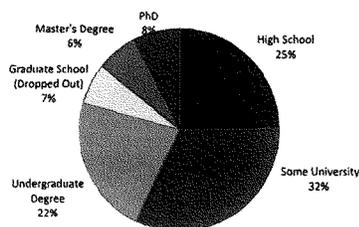


FIG. 2.—Highest educational achievement.

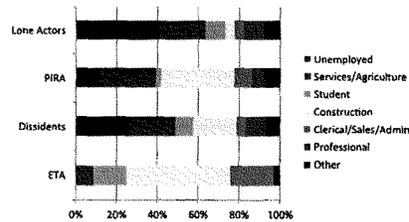


FIG. 3.—Comparative occupational category breakdown.

unemployed and those in the construction industry (see Fig. 3). In both the PIRA and ETA samples, the construction industry was the largest employer. PIRA and ETA were comprised of comparatively fewer unemployed individuals compared to the lone-actor terrorist data set.

**Military Experience**—A quarter (26%) had military experience. Of this subset, 76.7% had since left the army, the vast majority of whom for normal reasons. Some, however, had been ejected from the army for various offenses (such as racist behavior in the case of Sean Gillespie), and others had been suspended and faced court-martial (such as Naser Jason Abdo on child pornography charges). Of those who had military experience, 23.3% had actual combat experience.

**Criminal and Other Illicit Activities**—Significantly, 41.2% of the sample had previous criminal convictions, and this figure is far higher than what is anecdotally suggested regarding members of formal terrorist organizations, who prefer recruits with clean records as they are unlikely to raise red flags among the security community. Offenses included threats to life, first-degree robbery, criminal damage, custodial and second-degree assault, firearms offenses including possession, obstructing law enforcement officers, drunk driving, grand larceny, vehicle theft, blackmail, lewd and disorderly conduct, drug possession, counterfeiting, criminal use of explosives, vandalism, attempted murder, child neglect, restraining order violations, theft, income tax issues, child pornography possession, graffiti, and somewhat strangely "possession of a carcass of a protected barn owl". Of this subset, 63.3% served time in jail. During jail time, at least 32.3% of this subset adopted the ideology and radicalized (as reported in open-source news articles) for the event they later conducted or planned. Of the full sample, 37.8% had previously engaged in violent behaviors. More than a fifth (22.7%) had a history of substance abuse. At least 27.3% had no previous convictions or history of imprisonment.

**Mental Health**—Just less than a third (31.9%) had a history of mental illness or personality disorder. In the vast majority of these cases, the diagnosis had been made before the individual engaged in terrorism-related activities. Naveed Afzal Haq, for example, had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Of this cohort, many were prescribed medicine, others were committed into residential programs and psychiatric institutions, others were hospitalized, and some engaged with counseling services. Some lone actors were only diagnosed upon their arrest and subsequent trial (for example, Ted Kaczynski was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia).

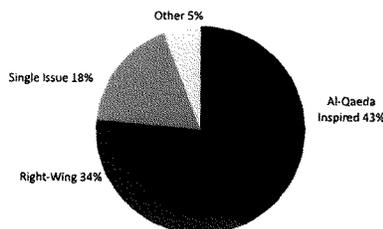


FIG. 4—Lone-actor ideological orientation.

#### Ideological Justifications

As Fig. 4 illustrates, the lone-actor terrorists in our sample had a range of ideologies. Religiously inspired lone actors constitute the largest set of actors at 43%. This is perhaps not a surprising finding given how loosely connected al-Qaeda's transnational network has become over time and al-Qaeda's growing emphasis upon lone-actor attacks (for example, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula's *Inspire* magazine has been a consistent advocate of this strategy). Those inspired by right-wing ideologies constitute the second largest group representing a third of the total sample. The third largest grouping is a clustering of individuals driven by single-issue causes such as antiabortion or environmental campaigning. The balance between these groups has changed over time. Only 7.8% of religiously oriented lone actors engaged in their terrorist actions before 2001, whereas the corresponding figures for right-wing extremists is 32.5% and single-issue offenders is 47.6%.

Historically, there have been very few lone-actor incidents involving left-wing or nationalist inspired individuals. For four of our cohort, it was extremely difficult to categorize the individual's ideological orientation and motivation. This is either because the individual's ideology was self-made (as in the case of Ted Kaczynski) or economically oriented (as in the case of Dwight Watson and arguably Bruce Ivins).

#### Awareness of Intentions

In most cases, other individuals knew something concerning some aspect of the offender's grievance, intent, beliefs, or extremist ideology prior to the event or planned event. In 58.8% of cases, the offender produced letters or public statements prior to the event outlining his/her beliefs (but not necessarily his/her violent intent). This figure aggregates both virtual and printed statements in newspapers and leaflets, etc. In 82.4% of the cases, other people were aware of the individual's grievance that spurred the terrorist plot, and in 79%, other individuals were aware of the individual's commitment to a specific extremist ideology. In 63.9% of the cases, family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in terrorism-related activities because the offender verbally told them. This is comparatively lower figure than the 81% found in a study of school shooters (18). In 65.5% of cases, the offenders expressed a desire to hurt others. This desire was communicated through either verbal or written statements. These findings suggest therefore that friends and family can play important roles in efforts that seek to

prevent terrorist plots. Of those who were married or in a relationship, 24.2% of the offenders' spouses or partners were members of a wider network associated with the ideology that inspired the lone-actor terrorist. Finally, in 22.7% of the cases, the individual provided a specific preterrorist event warning.

There is also much evidence to suggest that others were aware of the individual's disposition, but not necessarily their intent. In 53.8% of the cases, the offender was characterized by close friends/family as an angry individual. Of this subsample (64 individuals), there is a suggestion that the offender's anger was noticeably increasing in 62.5% of the cases.

#### Pre-Event Behaviors

This section provides an overview of our findings concerned with the behaviors the individual engaged in prior to the terrorist event or planned event. A fifth (20.2%) of the total sample converted to a religion before engaging or planning to engage in an event. Not all of those who converted were necessarily religiously motivated offenders, however. Some, such as Leo Felton, were motivated by right-wing ideologies. Others, such as James Kopp, were single-issue offenders. Of the al-Qaeda-inspired offenders, religious converts account for 37.3%. The religiosity of 29.4% of the al-Qaeda-inspired lone-actor terrorists noticeably increased in the buildup to their terrorist event or planned event.

Half (50.4%) changed address within the 5 years prior to their terrorist event planning or execution. Significantly, of those who did change address, 45% did so within 6 months of their eventual terrorist attack or arrest. A further 20% changed address between seven and twelve months prior to the terrorist event or preinceptive arrest. Altogether, this means that just less than a third of our total sample (32.8%) changed address in the year before their terrorist plot either occurred or was prevented.

As noted earlier, 40.2% were unemployed at the time of their arrest or terrorist event. Many were chronically unemployed and consistently struggled to hold any form of employment for a significant amount of time. Of the unemployed subset, however, approximately a quarter (26.6%) had lost their jobs within 6 months and a further 15.5% between seven and twelve months before the event. On a related note, 25.2% experienced financial problems. Of this subsample (30 individuals), 56.6% experienced financial problems within a year of their terrorist attack or plot.

Many (32.8%) of the offenders were characterized as being under an elevated level of stress due to a number of reasons. Of this subsample, 74.3% of the cases of elevated stress occurred within a year of the terrorist attack or plot. Very few had recently (e.g., within 5 years) experienced a death in their family (6.7%) that may have served as a catalyst for the intended violence that followed. Very few dropped out of school or left university (10.1%) before their terrorist event or planned event. Approximately one in five of those lone actors in gainful employment demonstrated worsening work performance in the buildup to their terrorist event or plot. Very few (6.7%) were interrupted in working on a proximate goal in the year before their terrorist event or planned event. Some (12.6%) noticeably increased their physical activities and outdoor excursions in the buildup to their terrorist event. At least 15.1% subjectively experienced being the target of an act of prejudice or unfairness. On a related note, 19.3% subjectively experienced being disrespected by others, while 14.3% experienced being the victim of verbal or physical assault. At least 25.2% of the full sample was characterized as suffering from long-term sources of stress.

possessed a stockpile of weapons for the commissioning of the offense.

Just over half of the observations (51.2%) successfully executed their terrorist attack. Of this sample ( $n = 61$ ), the majority of offenders (61.2%) used their personal vehicle to travel to the attack location, while others took public transport (16.1%), walked (9.6%), or rented a car (12.9%).

In 21% of the cases, the individual expressed remorse/regret following their event and subsequent arrest. Of these cases (25 individuals), 44% later changed their beliefs/ideological orientation. At least 16.6% expressed no remorse for their actions, and data were unavailable for the rest of the cases.

#### Comparing Subgroups of Lone-Actor Terrorists

The descriptive analysis of our data above illustrates that there is no reliable profile of a lone-actor terrorist. In this section, the authors examine specific subgroups of lone-actor terrorists to explore whether the individual characteristics and behaviors of lone-actor terrorists differ across these distinctions.

#### Comparing Lone-Actor Terrorists by Ideology

Terrorist groups are commonly distinguished across motivational and ideological domains (19–21). The three most prevalent ideologies held by members of our lone-actor terrorist data set were right-wing, single-issue (animal rights, antiabortion, environmentalism), and al-Qaeda-related ideologies. In Table 1, the major differences in individual characteristics and antecedent event behaviors associated with lone actors who held these ideologies are outlined. To identify differences between ideological groups,  $2 \times 2$  chi-squared analyses (or Fisher's exact tests where appropriate) were run for each ideological domain against each antecedent and behavioral variable (e.g., right wing vs.

single issue/al-Qaeda). A one-way ANOVA comparison of means test was used for the average age variable.

As the results suggest, there are distinctions among lone-actor terrorists with specific types of ideologies. The average age of al-Qaeda-related lone actors was 10 years younger than that of either the right-wing or single-issue cohorts. Members of this subgroup (compared to a combination of right-wing and single-issue lone actors) were also significantly more likely to be students or have a university degree and/or some experience of university. They were significantly less likely to have previous criminal convictions or experience of imprisonment at the time of their terrorist event. Given the ideological beliefs of this subgroup, it is also not surprising that they were significantly more likely to seek legitimization from religious, political, social, or civic leaders prior to their terrorist event or plot and significantly more likely to be religious converts. They were also significantly more likely to learn through virtual sources and to be living away from home during the phase when they adopted their extremist ideology. There was also a significantly higher indication of command and control links with this subgroup (mainly through others helping them procuring weaponry or through others knowing about the specific attack plan). Historically, al-Qaeda-related lone-actor terrorists have been significantly less likely to be U.S.-based compared to those espousing right-wing or single-issue ideologies. They have also been significantly less likely to join a wider pressure group or social movement in the buildup to their terrorist event and significantly less likely to successfully execute their terrorist attack.

Compared to both single-issue and al-Qaeda-inspired offenders, right-wing lone-actor terrorists were significantly less likely to have experienced any form of university education, work as a professional, be a student, be a religious convert, or be living away from home when they adopted their radical ideology or have children. They were more likely to be employed in

TABLE 1—Comparing lone actors across ideological domains.

	Right Wing ( $n = 40$ )	Single Issue ( $n = 21$ )	Al-Qaeda Related ( $n = 52$ )
Town size <20,000	37.5%***	28.6%	9.6%***
University experience	15%***	52.4%	50%***
Worked in construction	12.5%***	0%	0%***
Worked as a professional	2.5%*	14.3%	11.5%
Student at time of event	2.5%*	4.8%	17.3%***
Unemployed	50%*	38.1%	30.8%
Verbal statements to friends/family about intent or beliefs	52.5%***	71.4%	71.2%
Religious convert	2.5%***	19%	36.5%***
Sought legitimization	7.5%**	9.5%	28.8%***
Lived away from home when ideology adopted	15%**	19%	38.5%***
Others helped procure weaponry	10%***	33.3%	32.7%*
Engaged in dry runs	17.5%**	47.6%**	30.8%
Recently joined a wider group/movement	47.5%**	38.1%	23.1%**
Evidence of command and control links	5%**	4.8%	30.8%***
Based in the United States	52.5%	71.4%***	28.8%***
In a relationship	20%	52.4%***	21.2%
Previous criminal conviction	50%	61.9%***	26.9%***
Previously imprisoned	27.5%	47.6%**	19.2%*
Provided a pre-event warning	17.5%	38.1%*	21.2%
Spouse/partner part of a wider movement	5%	19%**	3.8%
Learned through virtual sources	37.5%	19%**	65.4%***
History of mental illness	30%	52.4%**	25%
Others aware of individual's planning	52.5%	38.1%**	69.2%**
Children	15%**	42.9%*	28.8%
University degree	5%	4.8%	17.3%**
Average age	36.3 years	36.8 years	26.7 years***
Successful execution of terrorist attack	57.5%	66.7%	40.4%***

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

construction at the time of their terrorist event, to be based in a town with a population smaller than 20,000, and to have joined a wider pressure group or social movement before their terrorist action. In terms of specific event planning activities, they were significantly more likely to solely obtain the weapons and technology needed for the event but also significantly less likely to engage in dry runs, display evidence of command and control links, make verbal statements to friends and family about their intent or beliefs, or seek legitimization for their intended action from epistemic authority figures.

Compared to both al-Qaeda and right-wing offenders, single-issue lone-actor terrorists were significantly more likely to be in a relationship (and to have a spouse involved in a wider movement of activist politics), have children, be based in the United States, have previous criminal convictions and have previously been imprisoned. More than half had a history of mental illness. They were also significantly more likely to engage in dry runs and provide pre-event warnings and far less likely to learn through virtual sources. Single-issue lone-actor terrorists were also significantly less likely to have others aware of their research, planning, or intent to engage in a terrorist attack.

There was very little to differentiate among these subgroups of lone-actor terrorists in terms of making verbal statements to a wider audience outside of their immediate friends and family or other people knowing about the individual's grievance or extremist ideology prior to the event. There were also no differences in their histories of substance abuse, military engagement, and experiences of hands-on training; engagement with literature and propaganda (of a wider movement and of other lone actors); face-to-face interactions with members of a wider network; or possession of close associates involved in criminal activities.

#### Comparing Lone-Actor Terrorists by Network Connectivity

While comparing and contrasting lone-actor terrorists across ideological domains has revealed some interesting results,

perhaps a more important comparison for the practitioner community is one that examines lone-actor terrorists based on how operationally connected they are to a broader network of activists. Depending upon the level of connectivity, different investigative strategies or disruption efforts may be necessary. Table 2 illustrates the statistically significant differences between individual terrorists without command and control links, and individual terrorists with command and control links and isolated dyads.

Compared to isolated dyads and those with command and control links, the results suggest that individuals without command and control links were more likely to have military experience, previous criminal convictions, be based in the United States, hold either single-issue or right-wing ideologies, be characterized as socially isolated, and have a history of mental illness. They were significantly less likely to learn through virtual sources, increase their religiosity before their event, recently join a wider pressure group or social movement, attempt to recruit others, or have family or close associates involved in political violence or crime. Unsurprisingly, compared to both those with command and control links and isolated dyads, those without command and control links were also significantly less likely to interact either face-to-face or virtually with members of a wider network or have others aware of their planning, help build their IEDs, or help procure weaponry. They were also significantly less likely to be al-Qaeda inspired. They were also significantly more likely to successfully execute their terrorist attack.

Apart from network-related behaviors, there is little to differentiate between those with command and control links with those belonging to the other two subgroups. They were significantly more likely to have had others notice an increase in their religiosity and be inspired by al-Qaeda. They were significantly less likely to be influenced by right-wing or single-issue ideologies, be characterized as socially isolated, have previous criminal convictions, military experience, or be based in the United States. They were also significantly less likely to successfully execute their terrorist attack.

TABLE 2—Comparing lone actors by network connectivity.

	Individuals Without Command and Control Links (n = 87) (%)	Individuals With Command and Control Links (n = 21) (%)	Isolated Dyads (n = 11) (%)
Based in the United States	55.2***	4.8***	36.4
Previous military experience	31.1**	4.8**	9.1
Previous criminal conviction	47.1**	19.0*	36.4
Held a PhD	2.3	0	18.2**
Lived alone	40.2	38.1	9.1**
Lived away from home when ideology adopted	23	42.9*	27.3
Received training	20.7	33.3	0*
Learned through virtual sources	40.2***	66.7*	72.7*
History of mental illness	33.6**	19	9.1
Socially isolated	57.5*	33.3*	45.5
Recently joined a wider group/movement	27.6**	47.6	45.5
Noticeable increase in religiosity	23.1**	61.9***	27.3
Family/close associates involved in political violence/crime	27.6***	57.1**	63.6**
Interacted face-to-face with wider network	39.1***	61.9	90.3***
Interacted virtually with wider network	28.7***	57.1**	63.6*
Others helped procure weaponry	17.2***	38.1*	45.5*
Others helped build IED	6.9***	33.3***	27.3
Others aware of individual's planning	42.5***	100***	100***
Attempted to recruit others	27.6**	33.3	81.8***
Consumed propaganda from a wider movement	65.5*	85.7*	72.7
Al-Qaeda related	3.3***	76.2***	63.6
Single issue	2.3**	4.8*	0
Right wing	39.1**	9.5**	36.4
Successfully executed an attack	57.5**	33.3*	27.3

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

TABLE 3—Comparing successful lone actors to intercepted lone actors.

Did the Individual Successfully Commit an Attack?	Yes (n = 61) (%)	No (n = 58) (%)
University experience	54.1***	24.1
Socially isolated	70.5***	34.5
History of mental illness	39.3**	24.1
Previously rejected from wider group	16.4**	3.4
Other's aware of research/planning or preparation for event	36.1	79.3***
Attempted to recruit others	24.6	44.8**
Learn through virtual sources	29.5	63.8***
Bomb-making Manuals in home	31.1	70.7***
Recently exposed to new media	19.7	41.4***
Interacted virtually with wider network	24.6	46.6**
Read or consumed literature/propaganda from a wider movement	52.5	84.5***
Read or consumed literature/propaganda about other lone actors	11.5	43.1***
Read or consumed literature/propaganda of other lone actors	8.2	22.4**

\* $p < 0.1$ ; \*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.01$ .

For isolated dyads, it is also largely the case that little separates them from the other two subgroups other than network-related behaviors. Compared to the other two subgroups, isolated dyads were significantly more likely to attempt to recruit others and hold a PhD. Isolated dyads were significantly less likely to receive hands-on training or live alone.

#### Comparing Successful and Foiled Lone-Actor Terrorists

This section outlines the significant differences between those lone-actor terrorists who successfully executed an attack and those who did not. To calculate whether differences were significant, chi-squared tests were used for each variable (Table 3).

Interestingly, those who successfully committed an attack were significantly less likely to engage in a number of network-related behaviors including having other's aware of their attack planning, attempting to recruit others, learning through virtual sources, possessing bomb-making manuals, being recently exposed to new media, interacting virtually with members of a wider network, and consuming/reading propaganda related to either a wider group or other lone-actor terrorists. Successful lone-actor terrorists, however, were significantly more likely to have university experience, be characterized as being socially isolated, have a history of mental illness, or have previously been rejected from a wider group or movement.

#### Discussion and Conclusion

This article focused on 119 lone-actor terrorists and the behaviors that underpinned the development and/or execution their plots. In total, seven key findings were identified. This section summarizes these findings and highlights their implications from a preventative and investigative perspective before concluding with a discussion of potential avenues for future research.

#### Findings and Implications

**Finding 1:** There was no uniform profile of lone-actor terrorists.

Although heavily male-oriented, there were no uniform variables that characterized all or even a majority of lone-actor terrorists. The sample ranged in age from 15 to 69. Half were

single, 24% were married, and 22% were separated or divorced. Twenty-seven percent had children. Educational achievement varied substantially with approximately a quarter either having attended or finishing high school, approximately a third of the sample having attended, but not graduating from some form of university, 22% completing an undergraduate degree, and 21% having attended or finishing some form of graduate school. In total, 8% held a PhD, while 40% of the sample was unemployed at the time of their terrorist attacks or arrests, 50% held jobs (11% professional positions), and 10% were students. Twenty-six percent had served in the military. Finally, forty-one percent had previous criminal convictions, 31% had a history of mental health problems, and 22% had a history of substance abuse.

Thus, no clear profile emerged from the data. Even if such a profile were evident, however, an over-reliance on the use of such a profile would be unwarranted because many more people who do not engage in lone-actor terrorism would share these characteristics, while others might not but would still engage in lone-actor terrorism.

**Finding 2:** In the time leading up to most lone-actor terrorist events, evidence suggests that other people generally knew about the offender's grievance, extremist ideology, views and/or intent to engage in violence.

For a large majority (83%) of offenders, others were aware of the grievances that later spurred their terrorist plots or actions. In a similar number of cases (79%), others were aware of the individual's commitment to a specific extremist ideology. In 64% of cases, family and friends were aware of the individual's intent to engage in a terrorism-related activity because the offender verbally told them. In 58% of cases, other individuals possessed specific information about the lone actor's research, planning, and/or preparation prior to the event itself. Finally, in a majority (59%) of cases, the offender produced letters or made public statements prior to the event to outline his/her beliefs (but not his/her violent intentions). These statements include both letters sent to newspapers, self-printed/disseminated leaflets, and statements in virtual forums.

These findings suggest that friends, family, and coworkers can play important roles in efforts that seek to prevent or disrupt lone-actor terrorist plots. In many cases, those aware of the individual's intent to engage in violence did not report this information to the relevant authorities. It is important therefore to provide information to the wider public on the behavioral indicators of radicalization to violence as well as appropriate outlets for this information to be reported and subsequently investigated. In any event, this finding may have significant implications for the development of operational investigations.

Indeed, most of the variables related to others having knowledge of the lone actor's views and intent were far more common across lone actors than any sociodemographic characteristics. This suggests that lone-actor terrorists should largely be characterized by what they do rather than who they are.

**Finding 3:** A wide range of activities and experiences preceded lone actors' plots or events.

Although the authors found it is more important to focus on what lone-actor terrorists do than who they are, it is still important to recognize that no single set of behaviors underpins lone-actor terrorism. Half of the sample changed address at least five years prior to their terrorist event planning or execution. Of the 40% who were unemployed, 27% had lost their jobs within six months, and a further 16% between seven and twelve months before the event. On a related note, 25% experienced financial problems. Thirty-three percent of the offenders were characterized

as being under an elevated level of stress due to a number of reasons. Of this subsample, 74% experienced elevated stress within a year of the terrorist plot or event. Approximately one in five of those lone actors in gainful employment demonstrated worsening work performance in the buildup to their terrorist plot or event. Fifteen percent subjectively experienced being the target of an act of prejudice or unfairness, 19% subjectively experienced being disrespected by others, and 14% experienced being the victim of verbal or physical assault. A fifth of the sample converted to a religion before engaging or planning to engage in an event. Thirteen percent noticeably increased their physical activities and outdoor excursions.

Thus, behaviorally, the lone-actor terrorist sample was also diverse. The behaviors related to the individual's radicalization and trajectory into terrorism were not overly similar from case to case. Similarly, the rhythm and tempo of each developmental trajectory also differed.

**Finding 4:** Many but not all lone-actor terrorists were socially isolated.

More than a quarter of the sample (27%) adopted their radical ideology when living away from home in another town, city, or country. Thirty-seven percent lived alone at the time of their event planning and/or execution, and 53% were characterized as socially isolated by sources within the coded open-source accounts.

Some lone-actor terrorists experienced problems with personal relationships. In these cases, social isolation tended not to be a long-standing occurrence but instead was derived from more recent interpersonal conflict. For example, 31% experienced problems in close personal relationships (e.g., family, romantic relationships). Of this subsample, 33% experienced these difficulties within the 6 months prior to planning or conducting their terrorist event. Eleven percent of the full sample experienced being ignored or treated poorly by someone important to them in the buildup to their terrorist plot or event. Additionally, 8% experienced someone important to them demonstrating that they did not care about the individual in the buildup to their offense.

A popular perception exists that lone-actor terrorists are isolated from the rest of society while their grievances grow and plots develop. This is perhaps best illustrated by the example of Ted Kaczynski, the so-called "Unabomber." Collectively, however, lone-actor terrorists are more likely to be socially embedded within wider networks than be socially isolated. While those who are socially isolated are a minority, they do represent a specific threat to investigations that rely upon intercepting communications or receiving warnings from friends and family. Efforts aimed at combating socially isolated lone actors may additionally need to consider issues pertaining to the supply chain of weapons, bombing materials, and the operational manuals that are available online.

**Finding 5:** Lone-actor terrorists regularly engaged in a detectable and observable range of activities with a wider pressure group, social movement, or terrorist organization.

Approximately a third of the sample had recently joined a wider group, organization, or movement that engaged in contentious politics. Just less than a half (48%) interacted face-to-face with members of a wider network of political activists, and 35% did so virtually. In 68% of the cases, there is evidence to suggest that the individual read or consumed literature or propaganda associated with a wider movement. Fourteen percent previously engaged in fundraising or financial donations to a wider network of individuals associated with either licit pressure groups or

illicit groups who espoused violent intentions. One in six (17%) sought legitimization from religious, political, social, or civic leaders prior to the event they planned.

There is evidence to suggest that in 17% of the cases there may have been wider command and control links specifically associated with the violent event that was planned or carried out. In approximately a third of the cases (35%), the lone actor had tried to recruit others or form a group prior to the event. In 24% of cases, other individuals were involved in procuring weaponry or technology that was used (or planned to be used) in the terrorist event but did not themselves plan to participate in the violent actions. In 13% of cases, other individuals helped the lone actor assemble an explosive device.

Much of the concern regarding lone-actor terrorism stems from the particular challenges of detecting and intercepting lone-actor terrorist events before they occur. Although they vary significantly in their effectiveness, there is a common perception that lone-actor plots are virtually undetectable. The traditional image of a lone-actor terrorist is that of an individual who creates his/her own ideology and plans and executes attacks with no help from others. Our findings suggest, however, that many lone-actor terrorists regularly interact with wider pressure groups and movements either face-to-face or virtually. This suggests that traditional counterterrorism measures (such as counterintelligence, HUMINT, interception of communications, surveillance of persons etc.) may have applicability to the early detection of certain lone-actor terrorists at specific moments in their pathway toward violence.

**Finding 6:** Lone-actor terrorist events were rarely sudden and impulsive.

Training for the plot typically occurred in a number of ways. Approximately a fifth of the sample (21%) received some form of hands-on training, while 46% learned through virtual sources. In half the cases, investigators found evidence of bomb-making manuals within the offender's home or on his or her property. The fact that much strategic and tactical planning goes into lone-actor terrorist events is demonstrated by the finding that 29% of offenders engaged in dry runs of their intended activities.

Typically, lone-actor terrorist events emerge from a gradual chain of behaviors. This chain includes the steps of adopting an extremist ideology, thinking about engaging in violence, acquiring the necessary materials and/or training, and finally committing the offense. These behaviors may be observable prior to the commission of events. Although the development of a lone-actor terrorist event is rarely impulsive, at times there is very little time between the offender choosing to use violence and committing an attack.

**Finding 7:** Despite the diversity of lone-actor terrorists, there were distinguishable differences between subgroups.

While no uniform profile exists across our sample, there were significant differences when we compared subgroups. For example, compared to right-wing offenders and single-issue offenders, those inspired by al-Qaeda were younger and more likely to be students and to have sought legitimization from epistemic authority figures. They were also more likely to learn through virtual sources and display some form of command and control links. Right-wing offenders were more likely to be unemployed and less likely to have any university experience, make verbal statements to friends and family about their intent or beliefs, and engage in dry runs or obtain help in procuring weaponry. Single-issue offenders were more likely to be in a relationship, have criminal convictions, have a history of mental illness, provide specific pre-event warnings, and engage in dry runs. They were

less likely to learn through virtual sources or have others aware of their planning.

This suggests the importance of not treating all lone-actor terrorists homogeneously and may have implications both for prevention and disruption as well as subsequent investigation.

#### Future Directions

While the data, analysis, and findings throughout this article are novel and important, it has only scratched the surface of what is a deeply complex and unfolding contemporary phenomenon. Together the results suggest the importance of focusing upon an analysis of behavior rather than attempting to identify and subsequently interpret what are realistically only semi-stable (at best) sociodemographic characteristics. What we lack, however, is an adequate control group to fully realize the significance of some of the descriptive findings. While the subgroup comparisons consistently found significant differences, it would be worthwhile to open the observations and data collection protocols to those individuals involved in fully or semi-autonomous groups. Through such an endeavor, a comparative approach would illustrate whether the descriptive findings related to antecedent behaviors and experiences are inherent to lone-actor terrorists or whether they are part of a wider trajectory in terrorism as a whole. An understanding of these dynamics would provide a wider evidence base to inform counterterrorism policies and practices. On a much more aspirational scale, there is also little evidence of the prevalence of these variables among the wider public and thus how much they truly distinguish lone-actor terrorists from law-abiding citizens.

Other methodologies will also provide other further insight. At the time of writing, there remain no publicly available interviews undertaken by researchers with lone-actor terrorists with the specific purpose of understanding how individuals decide to undertake violence as an individual, absent of formal terrorist group membership. Little is also known about the individual sociopsychological and practical constraints that need to be overcome to successfully execute a lone-actor terrorist attack. Finally, the finding that many of our sample had performed acts of criminality prior to their terrorist plotting suggests that it may be worthy to analyze these individuals from a criminal careers perspective. Such a perspective would provide insight into how individuals desist from one illegal activity and ultimately transition toward other illegal (but politically or socially driven) activities.

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## King of the Hate Business

Posted By *Jeffrey St. Clair - Alexander Cockburn* On May 15, 2009 @ 12:00 am In [article,articles](#) 2014 onward | [Comments Disabled](#)

What is the arch-salesman of hate-mongering, Mr. Morris Dees of the Southern Poverty Law Center doing now? He's saying that the election of a black president proves his point. Hate is on the rise! Send money!

Without skipping a beat, the mailshot moguls, who year after year make money selling the notion there's been a right resurgence out there in the hinterland with massed legions of haters, have used the election of a black president to say that, yes, hate is on the rise and America ready to burst apart at the seams, with millions of extremists primed to march down Main Street draped in Klan robes, a copy of Mein Kampf tucked under one arm and a Bible under the other, available for sneak photographs from minions of Chip Berlet, another salesman of the Christian menace, ripely endowed with millions to battle the legions of the cross.

Ever since 1971 US Postal Service mailbags have bulged with Dees' fundraising letters, scaring dollars out of the pockets of trembling liberals aghast at his lurid depictions of hate-sodden America, in dire need of legal confrontation by the SPLC. Nine years ago Ken Silverstein wrote a devastating commentary on Dees and the SPLC in *Harpers*, dissecting a typical swatch of Dees' solicitations. At that time, as Silverstein pointed out, the SPLC was "the wealthiest civil rights group in America," with \$120 million in assets.

As of October 2008 the net assets of the SPLC were \$170,240,129, The merchant of hate himself, Mr. Dees, was paid an annual \$273,132 as chief trial counsel, and the SPLC's president and CEO, Richard Cohen, \$290,193. Total revenue in 2007 was \$44,727,257 and program expenses \$20,804,536. In other words, the Southern Poverty Law Center was raising twice as much as it was spending on its proclaimed mission. Fund-raising and administrative expenses accounted for \$9 million, leaving \$14 million to be put in the center's vast asset portfolio.

The 990 non profit tax record for the SPLC indicates that the assets fell by about \$50 million last year, meaning that like almost all non profits the SPLC took a bath in the stock crash. So what was the end result of all that relentless hoarding down the year, as people of modest means, scared by Dees, sent him their contributions. Were they put to good use? It doesn't seem so. They vanished in an electronic blip.

But where are the haters? That hardy old stand-by, the KKK, despite the SPLC's predictable howls about an uptick in its chapters, is a moth-eaten and depleted troupe, at least 10 per cent of them on the government payroll as informants for the FBI. As Noel Ignatiev once remarked in his book *Race Traitor*, there isn't a public school in any county in the USA that doesn't represent a menace to blacks a thousand times more potent than that offered by the KKK, just as there aren't many such

schools that probably haven't been propositioned by Dees to buy one of the SPLC's "tolerance" programs. What school is going to go on record rejecting Dees-sponsored tolerance?

Dees and his hate-seekers scour the landscape for hate like the arms manufacturers inventing new threats and for the same reason: it's their staple.

The SPLC's latest "Year in Hate" report claims that "in 2008 the number of hate groups rose to 926, up 4 per cent from 2007, and 54 per cent since 2000." The SPLC doesn't measure the number of members in the groups, meaning they probably missed me. Change that total to 927. I'm a hate group, meaning in Dees-speak, "one with beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people," starting with Dick Cheney. We love to dream of him being water-boarded, subjected to loops of Schonberg played at top volume, locked up naked in a meat locker. But the nation's haters are mostly like us, enjoying their (increasingly circumscribed) constitutionally guaranteed right to hate, solitary, disorganized, prone to sickening relapses into love, or at least the sort of amiable tolerance for All Mankind experienced when looking at photos of Carla Bruni and Princess Letizia of Spain kissing.

The effective haters are big, powerful easily identifiable entities. Why is Dees fingering militia men in a potato field in Idaho when we have identifiable, well-organized groups which the SPLC could take on. To cite reports from the Urban League, and United for a Fair Economy, minorities are more than three times as likely to hold high-cost subprime loans, foisted on them by predatory lenders, meaning the big banks; "all black and latino subprime borrowers could stand to lose between \$164 billion and \$213 billion for loans taken during the past eight years."

Get those bankers and big mortgage touts into court, chief counsel Dees! How about helping workers fired by people who hate anyone trying to organize a union? What about defending immigrants rounded up in ICE raids? How about attacking the roots of southern poverty, and the system that sustains that poverty as expressed in the endless prisons and Death Rows across the south, disproportionately crammed with blacks and Hispanics?

You fight theatrically, the Dees way, or you fight substantively, like Stephen Bright, who makes only \$11,000 as president and senior counsel of the Southern Center for Human Rights. The center's director makes less than \$50,000. It has net assets of a bit over \$4.5 million and allocates about \$1.6 million a year for expenses, 77 percent of its annual revenue. Bright's outfit is basically dedicated to two things: prison litigation and the death penalty. He fights the system, case by case. Not the phony targets mostly tilted at by Dees but the effective, bipartisan, functional system of oppression, far more deadly and determined than the SPLC's tin-pot hate groups. Tear up your check to Dees and send it to Bright, (<http://www.schr.org/>) or to the Institute for Southern Studies (<http://www.southernstudies.org.html>) run by Chris Kromm, which has been doing brilliant spadework on the economy, on poverty and on exploitation in the south for four decades.

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**SECOND CLASS JUSTICE**

The pursuit of justice is a noble goal.  
 The attainment of justice is a noble goal.  
 Justice is a noble goal.

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**Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center, with \$300 million and offshore accounts and investments, still want your money**

Posted on September 7, 2012 by SBright

- *The Other Side*, an ecumenical religious magazine, described the work of Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center in 1989 as “the aggressive distribution of junk mail, soliciting funds for more junk mail.” It said Dees’s operation was “the kind of organization that saps the financial strength of a caring public, turning money that could be used for good into little more than junk mail and a fat endowment for its own well-paid lawyers.”

It told its readers: “You’d have to be absolutely bonkers to give SPLC a penny.”

You’d have to be even more bonkers today. By now, the Center now has sapped enough from a caring public that despite spending millions each year it had over **\$302,826,000** at the end of fiscal year 2014 (according to its mailings) as well as two buildings – known as the “poverty palaces” in Montgomery, Alabama – offshore accounts in the Cayman and Bermuda Islands, and investments in several foreign corporations and investment companies. As one article observed, it “is probably the richest poverty organization in the history of the world.”

Dees, a multimillionaire who had already made a fortune in junk mail sales of everything from doormats to cookbooks before starting the Center in 1971, has continued to raise millions upon millions of dollars through junk mail, telemarketing, internet and e-mail solicitations and other means using various aliases and schemes and hiding the Center’s enormous wealth.

This wealth is all the more remarkable because the operating expenses of the Center during this time have been substantial – many would say extravagant. The Center pays high salaries (Dees was paid \$365,000 and President Richard Cohen \$359,000, according to its 2013 tax returns, many times the salaries of real non-profit public interest organizations). It has built two buildings – one with a very expensive sculpture in front of it.

The Center brags a lot about some things, but hides its success in raising money. When mentioned in the solicitations, the information about the \$302 million is printed in the lightest type in a very small font so that it is difficult to read even with a magnifying glass. Usually the print is in the same color as the paper it is printed on, making it particularly hard to notice or read. It will not disclose its investments in foreign corporations and investment companies.

But some people have noticed over the years. The respected writer John Egerton wrote an article titled “Poverty Palace” in 1988 that questioned the fund raising tactics of Dees and others at the Center. At that time – 17 years after its creation – the Center’s endowment was \$22 million.

The *Montgomery Advertiser* in 1994 did a comprehensive expose of the shady fund raising practices of Dees and the Center, the high salaries of the staff, the lack of almost any black employees, and the mistreatment of the few

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blacks who worked there. These articles ran over several days under the general title "Charity of Riches." The *Advertiser's* findings are set out in the [initial article](#) in the series.

Two years later, *USA Today* called the Center "the nation's richest civil rights organization with \$68 million in assets." Andrea Stone, "Morris Dees: At the Center of the Radical Storm," *USA Today*, August 3, 1996, A-7.

*Harper's* magazine [reported](#) in 2000 that Dees had promised to stop fund raising once the endowment reached \$55 million, but then changed it to \$100 million. Nevertheless, although the endowment had reached \$120 million by 2000, *Harper's* found the Center "spends most of its time – and money – on a relentless fund-raising campaign."

*Harper's* reported that some of the Center's junk mail solicitations were "flagrantly misleading." One example was a letter sent out in 1995 – when the Center had more than \$60 million – that told its readers that the "strain on our current operating budget is the greatest in our 25-year history."

But there was no strain. SPLC raises far more from its junk mail, telemarketing, e-mail and other solicitations, and interest on its millions than its spends on fundraising and the work it does. *Harper's* reported in 2000 that the year before the Center had raised \$27 million in donations and received another \$17 million from investments for a total of \$44 million in income, but spent only \$13 million. SPLC raked in ~~\$54,420,509~~ in FY 2013.

In 2007, *Harper's* ran a [follow up story](#) reporting that in 2005 the Center had an income of \$44 million, "which dwarfed total spending (\$29 million)." That is how Dees has accumulated \$302 million by 2014. That was more than double of the \$120 million it had in 2000, a doubling of the \$60 million it had in 1995.

Much of the junk mailing, telemarketing and e-mail solicitations are done under various names and schemes – such as Klan Watch, Wall of Tolerance, and Teaching Tolerance. Appeals carrying the names celebrities implore people to give the Center money to support its "dangerous" work "against the forces of hate, injustice, and intolerance."

One solicitation, reported by the *Montgomery Advertiser's* initial article, described that a poor woman who needed an overcoat decided to make a donation to the Center instead of buying the coat. Of course neither that woman nor the people who received solicitations urging them to follow her example realize that they were giving to a multimillion dollar organization with a highly paid staff that would not have any difficulty buying an overcoat. This is "reverse Robin Hood" fundraising – asking the poor to give to the rich.

The Center is not really about "Poverty" or "Law." Dees has found that tracking the speech and activities of "hate groups" – largely duplicating the work of the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security and other law enforcement agencies – is a lucrative area for his fundraising appeals. But Dees has been criticized for slapping the label "hate group" on groups that cannot fairly be characterized as such. See reports by [CNN](#), the *American Thinker*, and the *Weekly Standard*.

Dees claims that because he monitors hate groups, he is in danger and that is yet another reason to donate to the Center. In 2009, President Richard Cohen sent a [solicitation](#) saying contributions were urgently needed to protect Dees:

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*Q: What were the instructions?*

*A: The instructions were to kill [Morris Dees].*

*Q: How close did you get to killing Mr. Dees?*

*A: Within days.*

*– Testimony of former neo-Nazi, Nov. 12, 2008*

Dear Friend,

Thankfully, this plot to kill Morris was thwarted by an FBI informant. But according to the same informant, there are many other white supremacists bent on seeing Morris dead because of his courtroom victories against violent hate groups.

That's why I'm asking you to make a special contribution to help us pay for our critical security measures. We need your help to keep Morris, the SPLC, and our staff safe so that we can continue to do our vital work.

\* \* \*

**Help us ensure the safety of our staff.**

**Donate today.**

\* \* \*

Our security analyst, a former CIA agent, has stressed the need for enhanced security measures at the SPLC, "in light of recent attacks in 2009 against high profile targets associated with Civil and Human Rights causes."

Our security costs are staggering, but they're a measure of the threat that we face.

Please be as generous as you can and make a special, tax-deductible contribution today to help protect Morris and the staff.

\* \* \*

Cohen offered no explanation for why the Center could not protect Dees with the millions it already had, saying only "our security costs are staggering."

The next year, Dees made an unusual move for a man in danger of being killed by extremists. He allowed the *Montgomery Advertiser* to run a huge spread of photographs of his luxurious home, not characteristic of people who believe they are in danger. After the newspaper published the photographs of his home, Dees had the audacity to solicit funds to protect the SPLC staff *because people might know where its members were living*:

October 11, 2012

*"Keep fueling the fire SPLC. Very soon you will find yourself screaming in pure*

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*agony as you burn within it.*"

– Posted on a neo-Nazi website, Sept. 9

Dear Friend of the Center,

We can't shrug off threats like the one above.

More and more, white supremacists are posting our pictures, names, and addresses online. Just two months ago, a neo-Nazi actually posted pictures of the home of the SPLC president, Richard Cohen, with this provocative note about his apparent vulnerability: "[It] doesn't look like their fortress-like office building."

\* \* \*

That's why I'm asking you today to make a generous contribution to help protect my colleagues. I simply can't ask them to continue their work without taking the appropriate precautions.

SPLC's security staff works 24/7

Extremists are furious with us because we continue to do more than any other private organization in America to stand up to the radical right. \* \* \*

We won't back down, I can tell you that. But I must do everything I can to ensure the safety of my dedicated colleagues and their families.

Your role in this fight for justice – and our security – is crucial. Please send a special gift today to help keep the SPLC staff safe from violent hatemongers who wish to harm us and to help us pursue our work for justice and tolerance.

\* \* \*

Sincerely,

Morris Dees  
Founder, Southern Poverty Law Center

P.S. Our security team is on increased alert after a spate of extremist violence across the country. An extra gift right now would go a long way toward ensuring the safety of our staff.

Again, Dees offered no explanation as to why SPLC cannot protect its staff with the millions it already had.

Dees sent out a shameless solicitation in 2011 claiming that SPLC needed donations to protect the lives of police officers. This was to be accomplished by distributing to police departments a video and "other training tools" the SPLC had produced on identifying "potential domestic threats."

Some solicitation just appeal to the ego like paying the Center to have one's name engraved on its "Wall of Tolerance." Although the fund raising appeals made it sound like the names would be engraved in stone, the

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“wall” amounts to nothing more than a projector flashing the names on a wall at SPLC’s office. Dees has also raised money for a long time by soliciting contributions to distribute slick materials on teaching tolerance to school children.

The Center has employed some very capable staff who have done good work in voting rights, employment, prison conditions, capital punishment, juvenile justice and other areas. But the amount of good the Center has accomplished is embarrassingly small in comparison to the enormous wealth that it has. At times, Dees has taken a few cases based primarily on the potential for using them for fund raising. The Center has won large judgments and received considerable publicity for suits against the Klan and other hate groups. One of its most famous case was a wrongful death suit brought in 1984 on behalf of Beulah Mae Donald, mother of Michael Donald, a black teenager who had been murdered by the Klan in Mobile. The judgement was for \$7 million. Dees has used the case to raise millions. It is still mentioned in some of SPLC’s junk mail today.

Unmentioned is that in some of the cases the organizations and people sued had no lawyer to defend them. Nor is it mentioned that those sued were not able to pay the judgements against them. Beulah Mae Donald did not receive \$7 million for the lynching of her son because the total worth of the United Klans of America and the people sued was about \$175,000. Henry Hayes, who killed her son, was sentenced to death and executed by Alabama.

A remarkable number of people who have worked at the Center do not speak highly of Dees or their experience at the Center. Dennis Sweet, a prominent African American lawyer in Jackson, Mississippi, who served in the Mississippi legislature, has been particularly outspoken in his criticism of Dees. He was the second black lawyer to work at the Center. Both left the Center because of the treatment they received there.

Sweet, who had been an outstanding public defender in Washington, DC before going to SPLC in the early 1980s, spent two years at there. “Morris treated me differently. He came after me,” Sweet says in one of the *Montgomery Advertiser* articles about unequal treatment of black employees at the Center. “I had just left an environment where I was told I was one of the brightest,” Sweet said, “Morris wanted to say I was a moron.” Sweet has been a very successful lawyer in Jackson since leaving the Law Center.

Next to raising money, Dees’ other great accomplishment was winning in 1992 the confirmation of Alabama’s leading advocate of the death penalty, Ed Carnes, to the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit over the opposition of the entire civil rights community. President George H.W. Bush appointed Carnes near the end of his presidency. Civil rights leaders – such as Benjamin Hooks of the NAACP and Joseph Lowery of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference – opposed the nomination, pointing out Carnes’s defense of outrageous racial discrimination in capital trials in Alabama, his advocacy of the elimination of important legal protections for people facing the death penalty, and his opposition to competent legal representation for people facing the death penalty. With Dees’ support, Carnes was confirmed in a close vote by the Senate, putting an aggressive advocate for the death penalty on the Court and denying incoming President Bill Clinton the chance to appoint someone to the seat. As expected, Carnes has been an aggressive supporter of the death penalty and opponent of civil rights as a judge.

Despite all this deception and flimflammy, the American Bar Association gave Dees its highest award, the ABA Medal in August, 2012, raising questions about whether due diligence was performed before the award was made.

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And despite the Center's millions, the Peter and Patricia Gruber Foundation awarded \$100,000 to Dees in 2011 as a recipients of its Gruber Justice Prize.

However, it is highly unlikely that the Foundation's grant or other money raised will be used to protect Dees or for the "dangerous" work "against the forces of hate, injustice, and intolerance." Instead, as has been repeatedly pointed out throughout the Center's history, it will be spent on more junk mail, telemarketing and e-mail solicitations to raise money that will be spend on even more junk mail, telemarketing and e-mail solicitations.

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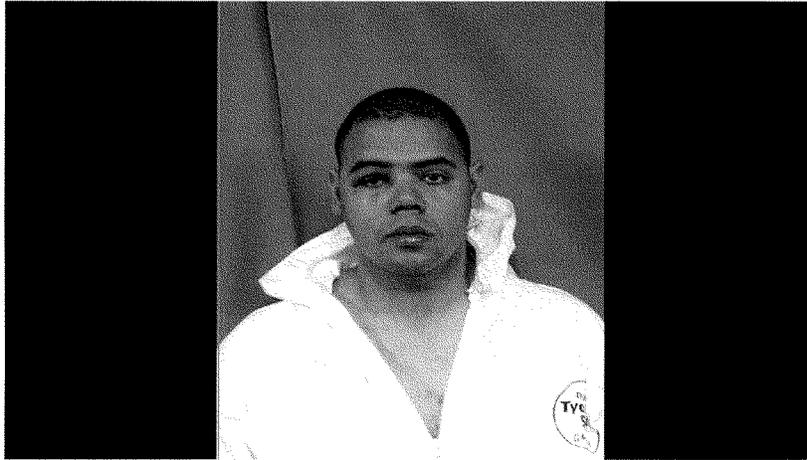
**SECOND CLASS JUSTICE**

*Proving Justice For All*

# prosecutors say

By Carol Cratty and Michael Pearson, CNN

Updated 6:41 AM ET, Thu February 7, 2013



Floyd Lee Corkins was arrested at the shooting scene.

## Story highlights

**NEW:** The president of the FRC accuses the Southern Poverty Law Center of "inciting violence"

Floyd Corkins, pleads guilty, says he wanted to intimidate those who oppose gay rights

He faces up to 70 years in prison when sentenced April 29

Building manager wrestled with Corkins and disarmed him after being shot in August incident

After years of thinking it over, Floyd Corkins finally had a plan.

He'd bought a gun and learned how to use it. He'd loaded three magazines. And he had stopped by Chick-fil-A to pick up 15 sandwiches, which he planned to smear in the dying faces of staffers he expected to kill at the Family Research Council in Washington.

It would be a statement, he said, "against the people who work in that building," according to documents filed in U.S. District Court, where Corkins pleaded guilty on Wednesday to three charges related to the August shooting at the conservative policy group.

Corkins told Judge Richard Roberts that he hoped to intimidate gay rights opponents.

The shooting came amid intense debate over remarks against gay marriage by an executive with the Atlanta-based Chick-fil-A restaurant chain and the company's support for groups considered hostile to gay rights.

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DC shooter wanted to kill as many as possible, prosecutors say - CNN.com

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...they endorse Chick-fil-A and also Chick-fil-A came out against gay marriage, so I was going to use that as a statement," prosecutors quoted Corkins as telling investigators.

Corkins, 28, pleaded guilty to committing an act of terrorism while armed, interstate transportation of a firearm and ammunition, and assault with intent to kill while armed.



Prosecutors dropped seven other charges.

The charges carry sentences of up to 70 years in prison. However, the sentence could be shorter because Corkins has no prior criminal record.

Corkins will be sentenced April 29, prosecutors said.

The act of terrorism charge alleges that Corkins wanted to kill building manager Leo Johnson and other Family Research Council employees "with the intent to intimidate and coerce a significant portion of the civilian population of the District of Columbia and the United States."

**Related Video:** Blame game grows in FRC shooting 03:27

It is a District of Columbia law passed in 2002 but never before used.



According to prosecutors' account of the attack filed on Wednesday, Corkins got into the Family Research Council's building by telling Johnson that he was there to interview for an internship.

After Johnson asked for identification, prosecutors say, Corkins reached into his backpack, retrieved a handgun and leveled it at Johnson's head.

Johnson ducked and lunged at Corkins before he could fire a shot, according to prosecutors.

**Related Video:** FRC shooting victim: Instincts took over 02:16

As the two struggled, Corkins fired three times, hitting Johnson once in the arm, before the building manager was able to wrestle him to the ground, disarm him and hold him at gunpoint until police arrived.

As he lay on the ground, Corkins said something to the effect, "It's not about you. It's about the FRC and its policies," according to the prosecution account.

Corkins -- who had chosen the research council as his target after finding it listed as an anti-gay group on the website of the Southern Poverty Law Center -- had planned to stride into the building and open fire on the people inside in an effort to kill as many as possible, he told investigators, according to the court documents.

If he'd been successful and escaped, his plan was to go to another conservative group to continue the attack, prosecutors said. A handwritten list naming three other groups he planned to attack was found among his belongings, prosecutors said.

According to the documents, Corkins had thought about such an attack for years but "just never went through with it."

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... went to the store the day before the attack for two hours of training.

U.S. Attorney Ronald Machen said Corkins' guilty plea "makes clear that using violence to terrorize political opponents will not be tolerated."

At the time of the shooting, Corkins lived with his parents in Herndon, Virginia, and volunteered at a Washington center for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

In August, FBI investigators said in an affidavit that investigators had interviewed Corkins' parents after the shooting, and they said their son "has strong opinions with respect to those he believes do not treat homosexuals in a fair manner."

The Southern Poverty Law Center has listed the Family Research Council as a hate group since 2010, pointing to what it describes as its anti-gay propaganda and legislative agenda.

On his nightly radio show on Wednesday, Family Research Council President Tony Perkins mentioned the plea deal and accused the Southern Poverty Law Center of playing a role in the shooting by inciting hatred and violence rather than fighting it -- a claim he has repeatedly made since the shooting.

"The Southern Poverty Law Center is dangerous. They are inciting hatred, and in this case a clear connection to violence," he said on the radio broadcast. "They need to be held accountable, and they need to be stopped before people are killed because of their reckless labeling and advocacy for homosexuality and their anti-Christian stance."

A spokeswoman for the center declined to comment on the plea deal or the research council's comments, but referred to a statement from the organization last year, standing by its designation of the Family Research Council as a "hate group."

"As people who care about human dignity, we have a moral obligation to call out the FRC for its demonizing lies and incendiary rhetoric about the LGBT community," the statement said. "The fact that we list the FRC as a hate group because of its demonizing propaganda does not make us the hateful one. Spreading demonizing lies is what is dangerous, not exposing them."

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## The Hate List

Is America really being overrun by right-wing militants?

BY J.M. BERGER    MARCH 12, 2013

The Southern Poverty Law Center released its annual "Year in Hate and Extremism" report last week, and as usual, it was terrifying. In an article for the SPLC's *Intelligence Report* magazine, researchers said they had identified an "all-time high" of 1,360 antigovernment groups active during 2012 and about the same staggering number of hate groups as last year, a total of 1,007.

Many news organizations, from wire services to TV networks, covered the new figures uncritically. The SPLC looms large in most discussions of American extremism, in large part because they have little or no competition. Very few journalists cover domestic extremism on a regular basis, and those who do tend to work for publications that have an overt political slant.

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There are no significant academic centers that regularly publish objective and rigorous data on non-Islamic domestic extremism (although a few notable individual efforts can be found). Government attempts to explore the issue are often consumed by political backlash, and a recent look at domestic right-wing extremism by the Countering Terrorism Center at West Point ignited a firestorm over its excessive political exposition, while its less than crystal-clear methodology raised other questions.

For better or worse, the SPLC remains the go-to media source for data on domestic extremists of the non-Muslim variety, with the Anti-Defamation League coming in second in terms of published resources. Those journalists who do cover domestic extremism often rely on the SPLC for facts and figures.

The problem is that the SPLC and the ADL are not objective purveyors of data. They're anti-hate activists. There's nothing wrong with that — advocating against hate is a noble idea. But as activists, their research needs to be weighed more carefully by media outlets that cover their pronouncements.

"The Year in Hate and Extremism" report classified domestic extremists in two broad categories: hate groups and antigovernment organizations. The raw numbers for antigovernment outfits were unavailable, but the data on the 1,007 hate groups cited in the report can be found online.

Many groups take exception to their inclusion on the hate list, arguing their content is legitimately political. Rather than get bogged down in that particular argument, let's simply look at the methodology of the list.

The SPLC presents its hate group data by state, rather than in one unified list. When the state entries were gathered into a single spreadsheet, the total number of groups came to 1,007, as advertised. But once you get past simply counting the rows, serious questions arise.

The biggest issue raised by the hate list is when a local group should be deemed a separate entity from a national group. When you go to find the raw data online, the SPLC's site explains that it counts counted "1,007 active hate groups in the United States in 2012," including "organizations and their chapters." But "The Year in Hate and Extremism" did not make the "chapter" distinction explicit. It is rarely drawn out in the organization's frequent media appearances, nor was it mentioned in a letter from the SPLC to the Justice Department warning of the growing threat.

One of the clearest examples of how this counting methodology can be confusing concerns the American Third Position Party, or A3P, which is listed 17 times, with each of those instances counting as a separate hate group.

A3P is a national political party devoted to white nationalism. We don't say there are 102 political parties in the United States because the Republicans and Democrats each have a national party as well as state chapters (not to mention local chapters), and there are states which have A3P listed more than once.

Similarly, the American Nazi Party is listed six times, and the Council of Conservative Citizens is listed 37 times. There are many more. When you filter the list for organizations with identical names, the list of 1,007 becomes a list of 358.

So why doesn't the SPLC describe its list as 300 or 400 hate groups with 1,007 chapters around the country?

"These are groups," said Heidi Beirich, who heads the SPLC Intelligence Project. So if A3P activists gather in Las Vegas, "it's a group of people who get together to promote these materials." And if a different group of A3P members gather in another state, that's a different group, according to the SPLC's count.

Some of the duplicate names on the list are legitimately distinct — for instance, there are at least two major splinter groups of the Aryan Nations (although seven appear on the list). But others appear clearly problematic, like "Georgia Militia," which is listed 14 times. One listing has a county as its location, another says "statewide," and the remaining 12 list no location and contain no links to additional information.

While there is an argument for separately counting local skinhead gangs with a national affiliation or Ku Klux Klan affiliates, it's not a slam dunk.

If three Klan chapters in one state are part of one specific national Klan organization, should they count as separate groups? If a skinhead gang is part of the Western Hammerskins, do you count both the local and the regional? The SPLC counts the Midland Hammerskins and the Northern Hammerskins three times each, and the Confederate Hammerskins nine times.

And what about the Jewish Defense League (counted nine times), the National Socialist Movement (55), or the Nation of Islam (105)?

The list isn't pristine on other fronts either. The Political Cesspool is a website and podcast, the Crocker Post is a blog, and Silver Bullet Gun Oil is a business that markets offensive tchotchkes to anti-Muslim extremists. VDARE is a white nationalist website with multiple authors, but it does not on the face of it appear to be a traditional boots-on-the-ground organization, at least not according to a profile written by the SPLC.

"We try very hard to avoid listing just a guy at a computer," said Beirich. "So we look very hard at other activities, like flyering, meeting, other activities, something that indicates it's more than just a guy working at a computer."

Beirich said some pure websites might have slipped through their filters, but argued that VDARE is an organization working actively to promote a specific agenda, citing a recent webinar with "several participants" as evidence of its organizational activities.

Radical bookstores and racist record labels also appear on the list. Are these hate groups, or hate businesses, or just businesses? Are they peddling specific ideologies or making a buck off of several? Do they hold meetings? Write tracts? Burn crosses?

Reasonable people can debate these reasons for including or disqualifying each of these listings, but the number of entries that require such debate is staggering given the specificity of the SPLC's reporting. We're not talking about a difference of 5 or 10 percent in the relative counts; it's 65 or 70 percent.

"I do not think it's misleading," said Beirich. "I think it would be much more misleading to say here's 10 or 15 groups than to point out, the way we do, the way those groups are functioning. We want to show the geographic reach of those groups."

Counting an organization like A3P as one instead of 17 would "distort the data in a different direction," Beirich said. "It would look like there are American Third Position people active in just one location, and that would be false."

But at the end of the day, it's not clear how it's a "distortion" to say "400 groups in 1,007 locations around the country" as opposed to "1,007 groups."

These distinctions also pertain to the broad numbers on antigovernment groups provided in "The Year in Hate and Extremism" report. Most coverage of the report focused on this realm, where the SPLC reported massive growth during President Obama's first term.

Although the data was not made available, the questions raised by the hate group list are at least as relevant for antigovernment organizations. If a statewide militia has chapters in several towns, is it more than one militia? If a Patriot movement group under one umbrella has one or two (or even five or six) people in each of 17 different states, should we count 17 groups?

These questions are more important than ever in the age of online organizing. During the 1990s, hosting a "chapter" implied a certain amount of organizational activity that is no longer necessary. Geography is still important, but it's not necessarily supreme.

Based on my own tracking of antigovernment extremism, I'm fairly certain the movement has grown in recent years, perhaps substantially. But most of the movements I track are geographically diffuse, even though they operate under a single organizational banner. I'm skeptical that the number of distinctly separate antigovernment organizations in the United States runs anywhere close to the 1,360 reported by the SPLC.

If there is any lesson in all of this, it's that the study of domestic American extremism shouldn't be the exclusive province of activists. Academics and journalists — a lot of them — need to turn their skills and objectivity toward this problem and start collecting evidence that can be published and rigorously reviewed.

As of today, journalists investigating domestic extremism have few alternatives to the SPLC when seeking information about the size and shape of extremist movements in the United States. Reporters have to work with the information they can obtain, but they should read — and carefully explain — the fine print.

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# NATIONAL REVIEW

## The SPLC and Slant

By Patrick Brennan — March 15, 2013

Domestic-terrorism expert J. M. Berger had [an interesting piece](#) for *Foreign Policy* this week in which he lays out the serious flaws with the work of the Southern Poverty Law Center, and the problems with monitoring domestic terrorism in general. He [explains](#):

The Southern Poverty Law Center released its annual "[Year in Hate and Extremism](#)" report last week, and as usual, it was terrifying. In an article for the SPLC's *Intelligence Report* magazine, researchers said they had identified an "all-time high" of 1,360 antigovernment groups active during 2012 and about the same staggering number of hate groups as last year, a total of 1,007.

Many [news organizations](#), from [wire services](#) to [TV networks](#), covered the new figures uncritically. The SPLC looms large in most discussions of American extremism, in large part because they have little or no competition. Very few journalists cover domestic extremism on a regular basis, and those who do tend to work for publications that have an overt [political slant](#). . . .

For better or worse, the SPLC remains the go-to media source for data on domestic extremists of the non-Muslim variety, with the Anti-Defamation League coming in second in terms of published resources. Those journalists who do cover domestic extremism often rely on the SPLC for facts and figures.

The problem is that the SPLC and the ADL are not objective purveyors of data. They're anti-hate activists. There's nothing wrong with that — advocating against hate is a noble idea. But as activists, their research needs to be weighed more carefully by media outlets that [cover their pronouncements](#).

In fact, it turns out, the SPLC's "Year in Hate and Extremism" probably seriously overstates the presence of hate groups and dangerous domestic groups. Berger explains why, specifically, the SPLC hugely inflates their headline numbers with a bizarre counting system. Only on the site where you find the raw data, and in none of their media releases, do they make it clear that the "1,007 hate groups" number counts individual chapters of national or regional groups. For

instance, “the American Nazi Party is listed six times, and the Council of Conservative Citizens is listed 37 times. There are many more. When you filter the list for organizations with identical names, the list of 1,007 becomes a list of 358.” Or look at “‘Georgia Militia,’ which is listed 14 times. One listing has a county as its location, another says ‘statewide,’ and the remaining 12 list no location and contain no links to additional information.”

The SPLC has various justifications for this methodology, but they don’t seem all that convincing. Berger concludes that “based on my own tracking of antigovernment extremism, I’m fairly certain the movement has grown in recent years, perhaps substantially,” but that’s, of course, no justification for the SPLC not to be as clear as possible in measuring that growth.

Berger’s absolutely right that the media should be more circumspect in reporting the SPLC’s observations as fact, in part because they are an advocacy group, not a scrupulously unbiased research organization. (It’s possible to be nonpartisan but not adhere to the standards of academic research.)

But another problem runs beyond what he identifies: The SPLC is not just far from an ideal source because it’s an anti-hate activist group, but because it’s a *leftist* anti-hate activist group. They definitely don’t regularly say this (they do acknowledge themselves to be activists), but they eventually admitted as such to NR’s Charlie Cooke back in 2011. Not only does the SPLC have a liberal stance, they actually just do not consider or research leftist domestic-terror or hate groups (except those that are otherwise specifically racist, such as black nationalists). When Charlie asked them about whether, in light of a serious bomb plot uncovered at Occupy Cleveland, they were going to cover the Occupy movement, an SPLC rep told him, “We’re not really set up to cover the extreme Left.”

The fact that they are “anti-hate activists” and not objective researchers only suggests subtle and implicit bias and sloppiness, like what Berger documents. But further, the SPLC’s bias is explicit: They purposefully do not cover or condemn the hateful or violent groups on their end of the ideological spectrum. It is scandalous, therefore, for the media to report the SPLC’s findings without fairly explaining what they do, no matter if they are the only source of data on this topic or not.

## King of Fearmongers


 The Weekly Standard logo, featuring the words "the weekly" in a small black box above the word "Standard" in a large, stylized, serif font.

*Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center, scaring donors since 1971*

APR 15, 2013 | By CHARLOTTE ALLEN

Last August a 28-year-old gay-rights volunteer named Floyd Corkins entered the office lobby of the Family Research Council (FRC), a Christian traditional-values group headquartered in Washington that condemns homosexual conduct and opposes same-sex marriage. Corkins took a gun from his backpack and fired three shots at building manager Leo Johnson, one of them wounding the unarmed Johnson in the arm before he wrested the gun from Corkins. On February 6 Corkins pleaded guilty to three felonies: committing an act of terrorism while armed, interstate transportation of a firearm and ammunition (he had bought the weapon in Virginia), and assault with intent to kill while armed. He faces a sentencing hearing on April 29 that could include up to 70 years in prison. According to federal prosecutors' statements in court documents, Corkins told investigators that he had intended to kill Johnson and numerous other FRC employees. His backpack contained 15 sandwiches from the fast-food chain Chick-fil-A, whose founder, S. Truett Cathy, contributed through his family foundation to several organizations opposed to gay marriage, including the FRC. According to prosecutors, Corkins said he had planned to smear the faces of the dead FRC employees with the sandwiches once his shooting spree ended.

Corkins found out about the FRC from the ever-expanding (at least in recent years) list of "hate groups" tracked on the website of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil-rights behemoth bursting with donor cash headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama. Cofounded in 1971 by Morris S. Dees Jr. and Joseph Levin Jr. (who is now general counsel), the SPLC started out fighting legal battles against lingering segregation in the South. More recently—and more lucratively, its critics say—it has transformed itself into an all-purpose antihate crusader, labeling 1,007 different organizations across America at last count as "anti-gay," "white nationalist," "anti-Muslim," "anti-immigrant," or just plain hateful (one SPLC category is "general

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hate”). The SPLC put the FRC on its list of “anti-gay” organizations in 2010, and the SPLC’s “Hate Map” page, whose banner displays men in Nazi-style helmets giving Sieg Heil salutes, lists the FRC among 14 hate groups headquartered in the District of Columbia. The Hate Map doesn’t include the groups’ street addresses, but those typically take only a few seconds to find with Google. Besides the chicken sandwiches and some 50 rounds of ammunition found on Corkins’s person was the address of the Traditional Values Coalition, another D.C.-based “anti-gay” group listed on the SPLC’s Hate Map.

At the time of the shooting, FRC president Tony Perkins lost no time doing a sort of reverse Sarah Palin on the SPLC. Liberal columnists and bloggers had blamed Palin—“blood is on [her] hands,” wrote one—for the near-fatal shooting of former Arizona representative Gabrielle Giffords near Tucson in 2011 because Palin had earlier placed Giffords on a “target list” of House Democrats to be defeated for reelection. (The Tucson gunman, Jared Lee Loughner, who killed six people in the crowd at Giffords’s event, turned out to be a schizophrenic whose politics, insofar as they could be determined, leaned left.) “The Southern Poverty Law Center is dangerous,” Perkins declared on his nightly radio show on February 6. “They are inciting hatred, and in this case a clear connection to violence. They need to be held accountable, and they need to be stopped before people are killed because of their reckless labeling and advocacy for homosexuality and their anti-Christian stance.”

Of course, it was as ridiculous to blame the SPLC for Corkins’s rampage as it had been to blame Palin for Loughner’s. Still, there was a delicious irony to savor: The “anti-hate” SPLC had unwittingly revved up someone who carried out an act that was unequivocally a hate crime: a potentially murderous vendetta against a group of people predicated solely on the religious and political views that they happened to hold.

Irony turns out to be what the SPLC is all about. Thanks to the generosity of four decades’ worth of donors, many of whom—as SPLC president Richard Cohen himself noted in a telephone interview with me—are aging Northern-state “1960s liberals” who continue to associate

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"Southern" and "poverty" with lynchings, white-hooded Klansmen, and sitting at the back of the bus, and thanks also to what can only be described as the sheer genius at direct-mail marketing of Dees, the SPLC's 76-year-old lawyer-founder, who was already a multimillionaire by the late 1960s from the direct-mail sales of everything from doormats to cookbooks, the SPLC is probably the richest poverty organization in the history of the world. From its very beginning the SPLC, thanks to Dees's talent for crafting multi-page alarmist fundraising letters, has not only continuously operated in the black, but has steadily accumulated a mountain of surpluses augmented by a shrewdly managed investment portfolio. Today the SPLC's net assets total more than \$256 million (that figure appears on the SPLC's 2011 tax return, the latest posted on the organization's website). That represented a more-than-doubling of the \$120 million in net assets that the SPLC reported in 2000, which was itself more than a doubling of the \$52 million in net assets that the SPLC reported during the mid-1990s.

So impressed was the Direct Marketing Association in 1998 with Dees's superb fundraising talents that it inducted him into its Hall of Fame, where he shares honors with Benjamin Franklin, first postmaster general, and catalogue retailer L. L. Bean. The SPLC's sprawling two-story concrete-and-glass headquarters in downtown Montgomery bore the nickname "Poverty Palace" among locals—until the mid-2000s, when the center, whose staff had grown to more than 200 (including 34 lawyers), moved into a fortress-like six-story office building that it had commissioned. The new SPLC building, a postmodernist parallelepiped faced in steel and black glass, has been variously described by its critics as a "small-scale Death Star" and a "highrise trailer."

The SPLC turned the original Poverty Palace into a museum that complements another of its Montgomery monuments, the Civil Rights Memorial, where an imposing granite circle designed by Maya Lin, architect of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, records the names of such iconic martyrs to the civil rights cause as Medgar Evers and Martin Luther King Jr., neither of whom was ever a client of the SPLC. In 2010 the *Montgomery Advertiser* published a 60-

photo online slideshow of Morris Dees's lavishly appointed neo-Mediterranean home, whose eclectic architectural and interior decor influences seemingly included the Alhambra. David

<http://www.weeklystandard.com/print/king-of-fearmongers/article714573>

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eclectic architectural and interior-decor influences seemingly included the Art Deco, David Hockney's swimming-pool paintings, the Etsy home page, and a 1970s shag-rug revival. In one slide Dees's fourth wife, artist and weaver Susan Starr, modeled a floor-length evening coat that she had stitched out of transparent vinyl sheeting and fake fur.

This leads to yet another SPLC irony: Its severest critics aren't on the conservative right (although the Federation for American Immigration Reform, another "hate group" on the SPLC's list, has done its fair share of complaining), but on the progressive left. It may come as a surprise to learn that one of the most vituperative of all the critics was the recently deceased Alexander Cockburn, columnist for the *Nation* and the leftist webzine *CounterPunch*. In a 2009 article for *CounterPunch* titled "King of the Hate Business," Cockburn castigated Dees and the SPLC for using the 2008 election of Barack Obama as America's first black president as yet another wringer for squeezing out direct-mail donations from "trembling liberals" by painting an apocalyptic picture of "millions of [anti-Obama] extremists primed to march down Main Street draped in Klan robes, a copy of *Mein Kampf* tucked under one arm and a Bible under the other." Cockburn continued: "Ever since 1971 U.S. Postal Service mailbags have bulged with Dees' fundraising letters, scaring dollars out of the pockets of trembling liberals aghast at his lurid depictions of hate-sodden America, in dire need of legal confrontation by the SPLC."

Cockburn was following on the heels of Ken Silverstein, who in 2000 wrote an article for the reliably liberal *Harper's* magazine titled "The Church of Morris Dees." Silverstein accused the SPLC of manufacturing connections between the "hate groups" that it highlighted in its numerous mailings—back then the groups on the SPLC list tended to be mostly fringe militia organizations—and the Columbine-style school shootings and a wave of black-church arsons during the 1990s that were a staple of the SPLC's direct-mail panic pleas. "Horrible as such incidents are, hate groups commit almost no violence," Silverstein wrote. "More than 95 percent of all 'hate crimes,' including most of the incidents SPLC letters cite (bombings, church burnings, school shootings), are perpetrated by 'lone wolves.' Even Timothy McVeigh [perpetrator of the 1995 bombing of a federal building in Oklahoma City that killed 168 people], subject of one of the most extensive investigations in the FBI's history—and one of the most

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extensive direct-mail campaigns in the SPLC's—was never credibly linked to any militia organization.”

Silverstein followed up with more of the same in a 2007 blog post for *Harper's*: “What [the SPLC] does best . . . is to raise obscene amounts of money by hyping fears about the power of [right-wing fringe] groups; hence the SPLC has become the nation's richest ‘civil rights’ organization.” In 2001 JoAnn Wypijewski wrote in the *Nation*: “Why the [SPLC] continues to keep ‘Poverty’ (or even ‘Law’) in its name can be ascribed only to nostalgia or a cynical understanding of the marketing possibilities in class guilt.” Silverstein had already noted in his 2000 *Harper's* article that “most SPLC donors are white.”

What has infuriated the SPLC's liberal critics is their suspicion that Morris Dees has used the SPLC primarily as a fundraising machine fueled by his direct-mail talents that generates a nice living for himself (the SPLC's 2010 tax filing lists a compensation package of \$345,000 for him as the organization's chief trial counsel and highest-paid employee) and a handful of other high ranking SPLC officials plus luxurious offices and perks, but that does relatively little in the way of providing the legal services to poor people that its name implies.

CharityWatch (formerly the American Institute of Philanthropy), an independent organization that monitors and rates leading nonprofits for their fundraising efficiency, has consistently given the SPLC its lowest grade of “F” (i.e., “poor”) for its stockpiling of assets far beyond what CharityWatch deems a reasonable reserve (three years' worth of operating expenses) to tide it over during donation-lean years. But even if the SPLC weren't sitting on an unspent \$256 million, according to CharityWatch, it would still be a mediocre (“C+”) performer among nonprofits. The SPLC's 2011 tax filing reveals that the organization raised a total of \$38.5 million from its donors that year but spent only \$24.9 million on “program services,” with the rest going to salaries, overhead, and fundraising. And even that 67 percent figure is somewhat inflated, according to CharityWatch, which notes that the SPLC takes advantage of an accounting rule that permits nonprofits to count some of their fundraising expenses as “public

education” if, for example, a mailer contains an informational component. CharityWatch, ignoring that accounting rule, maintains that only 60 percent—about \$19 million—went to program services during the year in question. The SPLC’s 2011 tax return reveals that the organization spent \$1.6 million (aside from salaries) on litigation-related costs that year, in contrast to the \$7.8 million it spent on “professional fundraising services,” “postage and shipping cost,” “printing & lettershop,” and “other development cost.”

Furthermore, the SPLC spends a relatively high \$26 on fundraising (according to CharityWatch, \$18 according to the SPLC) for every \$100 that it manages to raise. Compare that with the “B+” rated American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), where 78 percent of the budget goes to program services and \$20 is spent for every \$100 raised or to the “A-” rated ACLU Foundation (79 percent going to program services and only \$11 spent to raise \$100). True, the ACLU has net assets comparable to those of the SPLC, \$254 million according to a fiscal 2012 financial statement, but it spends a full \$111 million a year on program services. People who want to support a litigation-minded liberal organization and see a higher percentage of their donations actually spent on the causes they support might be better off giving to the ACLU—or to some shoestring civil rights nonprofit that actually needs the donor’s money.

In 1995, when the SPLC had amassed \$52 million in net assets, the *Montgomery Advertiser* published a Pulitzer-nominated investigative series about the organization, titled “Charity of Riches.” At that time the *Advertiser* concluded that the SPLC was spending only 31 percent of its revenue on program services and was essentially under the control of and subject to the fundraising whims of Dees. During the 1970s the SPLC had pursued several significant lawsuits enforcing the civil rights of African Americans. One suit had resulted in the racial integration of Alabama’s state police troopers, and another had led to a state redistricting that allowed black candidates to win seats in the state legislature for the first time in generations. But during the mid-1980s Dees decided to focus instead on suing the Ku Klux Klan and similar white-supremacist organizations: By then the Klan was moribund, with a membership that had declined from a peak of 4 million during the 1920s to about 5,000 members in 1980. But few

of the Northern liberals who formed the bulk of Dees's donor base seemed to know that. (Dees had used his letter-writing skills to raise \$24 million as a volunteer for George McGovern's Democratic presidential race in 1971-72, and he had received McGovern's campaign mailing list as a reward. He had also worked briefly on Jimmy Carter's 1976 presidential campaign and on Ted Kennedy's run for president in 1980.) The Klan made for hair-raising copy in Dees's mailings. One of his fundraising letters, quoted by the *Advertiser*, alluded to "armed Klan paramilitary forces [that] freely roam our wooded hills from Texas to North Carolina practicing with military-like weapons to 'kill niggers and Jews in a race war they are planning.' "

Letters such as this one generated tens of millions of dollars for the SPLC—but they also generated resentment among the lawyers who worked with Dees and complained that his fixation on donor money had crowded out the SPLC's traditional civil rights work. Early on, for example, the SPLC stopped handling death-penalty cases, even though opposition to capital punishment had been one of its early causes. (In 1975 Dees was one of the lawyers—and a major fundraiser—for Joan Little, a black inmate in North Carolina who had fatally stabbed a white jailer she said had been trying to rape her. Little's case became a progressive *cause célèbre*, and she was eventually acquitted of murder charges. During the trial Dees was removed from the courtroom and briefly charged with suborning the perjury of one of the witnesses; although the charges were dropped, the trial judge refused to allow Dees back on the case.) In 1977, however, Dees abruptly pulled the SPLC out of another high-profile capital case, that of the "Dawson Five," black men accused of murdering a store customer during a robbery in rural Georgia. Millard Farmer, a veteran death penalty lawyer in Atlanta who got the charges dropped, said in a telephone interview that Dees had told him that fighting the death penalty wasn't making any money for the SPLC. "He said, 'We're going to cut the money off,' " Farmer recalled. "He said, 'We'll give the case to a public defender.' " By Farmer's account, when he balked, Dees promptly sued him in federal court for improperly spending SPLC funds. Dees backed off after Farmer mounted an aggressive defense detailing where the SPLC funds

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had gone, and Dees eventually paid Farmer approximately \$50,000 in a settlement. (The SPLC

declined to make Dees available for an interview with me, but in a 1988 interview with the *Progressive's* John Egerton, Dees called Farmer a "fool.")

Dees further alienated opponents of the death penalty—and Southern liberals in general—by successfully lobbying the Senate in 1992 to confirm George H. W. Bush's nomination of Edward Carnes, head of the capital-punishment unit of the Alabama attorney general's office and a leading death-penalty advocate, to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit. "He was up in Washington staying at the Four Seasons Hotel [in Georgetown] and lobbying Congress every day," recalls Stephen B. Bright, a Yale law professor and president of the Atlanta-based Southern Center for Human Rights, a criminal-justice public-interest law firm that opposed the Carnes nomination. "He was the great Morris Dees, so he gave cover to the Democrats in Congress to vote to confirm Carnes," said Bright in a telephone interview. Bright's Southern Center has a \$2 million annual budget, with nine staff lawyers pulling down relatively modest salaries. "Their annual budget is \$30 million," said Bright of the SPLC, "and we accomplish more than they do with a lot less." Bright called Dees "a shyster if there ever was one—Morris is a con man."

Bright's words to me were nearly identical to those he had written in a 2007 letter to Kenneth C. Randall, dean of the University of Alabama's law school, Dees's alma mater, turning down an invitation to a presentation of the school's annual "Morris Dees Justice Award," jointly sponsored by Dees and the prestigious law firm Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. In that letter Bright called Dees "a con man and fraud." He wrote of Dees: "He has taken advantage of naïve, well-meaning people—some of moderate or low incomes—who believe his pitches and give to his [then] \$175 million operation. He has spent most of what they have sent him to raise still more millions, pay high salaries, and promote himself." (The Morris Dees Justice Award is currently defunct, and both Randall and Skadden Arps turned down my requests for interviews.)

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During the 1970s and 1980s Dees is said to have briefly flirted with other liberal causes for the

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SPLC—abortion rights and gun control, for example—before shutting them down. But he hit the jackpot with the Ku Klux Klan, helped along by Klansmen's regular denunciations of him as a Communist, an attempted firebombing of the SPLC office in 1983, and the occasional threat to his life. In 1981 Dees formed Klanwatch as an educational and publications unit of the SPLC. It was the beginning of the SPLC's focus on "hate groups." Fundraising letters flew out from Montgomery signed by such liberal celebrities as McGovern, Ethel Kennedy, and novelist Toni Morrison. A 1985 letter bearing the signature of a Montgomery rabbi "asked for funds to protect the Center and its staff, 'who are suffering under a siege of Ku Klux Klan and neo-Nazi terrorism unparalleled in this decade,'" Egerton reported in the *Progressive*. The letter with its hints of anti-Semitism run amok, reportedly mailed to zip codes on the East and West Coasts populated by wealthy Jews, referred to Dees as "Morris Seligman Dees." Dees was raised Baptist but received a rarely used Jewish-sounding middle name from his father, who had himself been named in honor of a "prominent Jewish Alabamian," Egerton noted in his article. At one point in 1986 the SPLC's entire cadre of staff attorneys quit en masse, dismayed by Dees's obsession with the Klan at the expense of what they perceived to be more pressing civil rights issues such as employment and housing discrimination.

Nonetheless the Klan and its white-supremacist spin-offs proved to be ideal litigation targets for the civil damage suits that the SPLC routinely filed on behalf of victims and their families: scattered, underfunded, and wounded by decades of infighting. The economically and socially marginal Klansmen, whose units typically consisted of a handful of down-market youths clustered around a kitchen table, could seldom afford either decent lawyers or the cost of mounting an effective defense (in civil cases, in contrast to criminal cases, the government is not obliged to supply defendants with free lawyers). Besides, what the groups were charged with having done—assaults and homicides—was appalling. The SPLC has won a handful of multimillion-dollar judgments against supremacist organizations, the latest one in 2008 against

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the Imperial Klans of America over the beating of a Panamanian-American. Nonetheless the judgments have mostly proved to be uncollectible because the tiny groups have typically owned

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judgments have mostly proved to be uncollectable, because the tiny groups have typically owned few if any assets that can be sold to satisfy a judgment.

The SPLC's most striking legal victory in the South was a \$7 million judgment in 1987 against the United Klans of America, notorious for the violent acts committed by its members during the civil rights struggles of the 1960s. The SPLC had filed the suit on behalf of Beulah Mae Donald, a black woman whose son Michael was lynched by two Klansmen in Mobile, Alabama, in 1981. Donald received only a tiny fraction of that amount, however, since the United Klans' sole asset by then was its national headquarters, a rundown warehouse in Tuscaloosa whose forced sale netted only \$51,875. Meanwhile, according to the *Montgomery Advertiser*, the SPLC's fundraising mailings highlighting the case, one of which featured a photo of Michael Donald's corpse, brought the center \$9 million in donations. The SPLC continues to this day to tout the \$7 million judgment in its promotional materials and to take credit for putting the United Klans out of business, although some of its members simply joined other Klan groups after the United Klans dissolved.

Similarly, a \$12.5 million judgment that the SPLC won in Oregon in 1990 against Tom Metzger, a former Ku Klux Klan grand dragon who later led a group called the White Aryan Resistance, over the beating death of an Ethiopian immigrant by three skinheads in 1988, remains largely a paper victory. Furthermore, even some civil libertarians were troubled by the SPLC's legal strategy, which was predicated on the theory that Metzger and his son were responsible for the homicide because they had made incendiary racist statements that inspired the skinheads to commit the crime. The ACLU, for example, filed a friend-of-the-court brief arguing that the Metzgers' statements were protected by the First Amendment's free-speech guarantees and that the father and son should have been held liable only if it could be proved that they had intentionally provoked the skinheads' violence.

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During the 1990s, when Timothy McVeigh became another name with which to launch a thousand direct-mail pitches, the SPLC branched out and began tracking, besides hate groups,

a category it calls “patriot groups.” Patriot groups can be full-fledged paramilitary militias—or they can simply be loose organizations of people who believe, say, that the Obama administration will soon be confiscating citizens’ guns (actually a not-unfounded belief, given the recent disclosure of a Justice Department memo arguing that gun regulation is meaningless without mandatory federal weapons buybacks), or that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is building secret concentration camps in anticipation of a declaration of martial law. One group on the SPLC’s latest patriot list, for example, calls itself the Granny Warriors: gray-haired ladies in North Carolina who trade canning tips and other food-stockpiling advice on a survivalist website of vintage 1990s design. Without entirely jettisoning its cash-generating Klan-centrism (an SPLC web page features a *Birth of a Nation*-style black-and-white photo of hooded men making a sinister circle around a flaming three-story cross), the SPLC changed the name of its quarterly magazine *Klanwatch* to *Intelligence Report*. The *Report* features alarmed articles, often written by Mark Potok, a former reporter for *USA Today* who now serves as the SPLC’s press spokesman and also as the editor of *Intelligence Report* and the organization’s *Hatewatch* blog. The articles in *Intelligence Report* and *Hatewatch* bear such scary-sounding titles as “Rage on the Right,” “The ‘Patriot Movement’ Explodes,” “For the Radical Right, Obama Victory Brings Fury and Fear,” and “Strange Bedfellows Snuggle Under White Sheets.” A 2010 post on *Hatewatch* didn’t quite go so far as to characterize the Tea Party as a hate group, but it came close, citing the grassroots movement’s attraction for “antigovernment extremists.” On a web page titled “Misogyny: The Sites,” the SPLC skirts self-parody, branding the “manosphere” blogs of pickup artists and other dispensers of seduction techniques as hate-promoting because their posts bear such titles as “Even Nice Girls Are Sluts” and “More Proof That Feminism is a Social Cancer.” The SPLC is currently spotlighting the prison gang Aryan Brotherhood of Texas as a hate group because of its rumored, although as yet unproven, connection to the murders of two prosecutors in Kaufman County, Texas.

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One of the SPLC’s leitmotifs is that there is an ever-spiraling amount of hate in America, and sure enough, its state-by-state list of hate and patriot groups has grown steadily over the years,

especially during the presidency of Obama, a godsend to the SPLC's fundraisers because of his race and his pro-gun control and pro-gay marriage stances. In the SPLC's latest hate report, issued on March 5, it counted a record 1,360 patriot groups alone during 2012, up 6.75 percent since 2011 and up by almost a factor of 10 from the mere 149 such organizations that the SPLC had counted just before Obama was elected in 2008. (The conservative George W. Bush years had apparently marked a kind of hate vacation for America's right-wingers, after they supposedly went militia-crazy during Bill Clinton's presidency.) Cohen, the SPLC's president, promptly shot off a letter to Attorney General Eric Holder and Homeland Security chief Janet Napolitano urging the pair to establish "an interagency task force to assess the adequacy of resources devoted to responding to the growing threat of non-Islamic domestic terrorism." (The SPLC ignores Muslim-linked terrorist activity on the theory that it is foreign-based.)

Critics have charged that the way the SPLC counts hate groups renders its impressive tallies essentially meaningless. One of the most vocal critics is Laird Wilcox, a self-described political liberal in Olathe, Kansas, who has been tracking radical-fringe organizations on both the left and the right for five decades, amassing an enormous documentary archive that is now housed at the library of the University of Kansas. According to Wilcox, many of the organizations on the SPLC's expansive list "may be two guys and a post-office box," while others might not exist at all. "Their lists of hate groups never have addresses that can be checked," Wilcox said in a telephone interview. "I've had police departments across the country calling me and saying we can't find this group [on the SPLC's list]. All they can find is a post-office box, so I have to tell them that I don't know whether they even exist." In a self-published book, *The Watchdogs*, he criticized the SPLC for having "misleadingly padded" its list of white-supremacy organizations. In particular, Wilcox faulted the SPLC for maintaining that three men accused of killing a police officer in Cortez, Colorado, in 1998 had belonged to a supposedly racist and anti-Semitic militia group called the Four Corners Patriots for whose existence no evidence ever emerged. "People have tried to track down these groups, but they couldn't find them," Wilcox said.

Contacted by telephone, SPLC spokesman Potok responded, "We really try to separate out real groups from a man and his dog and a computer—and yes, many of the groups are small. The

reason we count groups is that it's incredibly hard to count people. Certainly counting groups isn't a perfect method, and there's a valid question of whether one group of four people is better than two groups of two people."

A perhaps more serious objection to the SPLC's hate list is the loosey-goosey criteria by which the center decides which organizations qualify as hate groups. The Family Research Council that was the target of Floyd Corkins's planned rampage is a perfect example. Potok insists that the SPLC has a policy of not attaching the hate label to an organization simply because it interprets the Bible as forbidding homosexual activity: "We are not going to list groups on the basis of what they say Scripture says. But this is a group that is consciously promoting falsehoods and demonizing an entire group of people. It's fact-free demonization. The reason we listed them was on the basis of their known falsehoods and their baseless, repetitive name-calling. They push the idea that gay men molest children at substantially higher rates than heterosexuals. The science is settled that this is not the case."

A look at an FRC web page titled "Homosexuality and Child Sexual Abuse" reveals, however, that the issue of whether gay men are disproportionately represented among child-molesters is more a battle of the experts than settled science. The FRC cites two peer-reviewed studies published in respectable scholarly journals finding that up to one-third of incidents of child sexual abuse are male-on-male, in contrast to the reportedly 3 percent or so of the population who are homosexual (nearly all pedophiles are men). For its part the SPLC cites on its website a statement by the American Psychological Association (APA) that homosexual men are no more likely than heterosexual men to abuse children sexually and a meta-study by Gregory Herek, a psychology professor at the University of California, Davis, reaching a similar conclusion. While it may be that Herek's findings and the APA's conclusions bear more scholarly weight than those of the researchers cited by the FRC, it seems a stretch to accuse the FRC of deliberately

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promoting falsehoods. When I raised this objection with Potok by email, he emailed in reply: "The FRC and some of the other anti-LGBT groups portray gay people as sick, evil, perverted,

incestuous and a danger to the nation.”

Besides being willing to slap the hate label onto groups that may merely interpret data differently from the SPLC, the center routinely tries to link, if only by implication, increases in the number of hate and patriot groups it tallies to actual incidents of domestic terrorism and other violence. SPLC president Richard Cohen's March 5 warning letter to Holder and Napolitano trotted out the Oklahoma City bombing one more time, even though neither McVeigh nor his convicted co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, had ever belonged to any organization that could remotely be called a hate or patriot group. Similarly, after 40-year-old Wade Michael Page fatally shot six people at a Sikh temple near Milwaukee last August 5 before turning his gun onto himself, Potok and Heidi Beirich, the SPLC's intelligence director, issued a joint statement claiming to have been tracking Page since 2000 (when, they said, he had purchased “goods” from a now-nearly defunct neo-Nazi organization) and linking him to white-supremacist sentiment because he had once been the leader of a “racist white-power band.” The band in question, End Apathy, had described itself on a MySpace page as “old school,” with “punk and metal” influences, whose music was supposed to be “a sad commentary on our sick society and the problems that prevent true progress.” Page's actual motive for his murder spree remains a mystery to police and the FBI (he was apparently a loner who had trouble holding jobs and keeping girlfriends).

There is something disconcerting about a private organization spending years monitoring someone who had never committed a serious crime, and something equally disconcerting about trying to connect a rock band to a murder rampage, no matter how racist or otherwise unappetizing the band's lyrics might have been. Furthermore, it is odd that an organization that characterizes itself as being devoted to civil rights—a phrase that connotes the struggles of individuals to assert their rights against a tyrannical government—devotes its energies to tracking the activities of people who are insufficiently respectful of the government: Obama-loathers, opponents of gun control, politically incorrect metalheads, grandmothers who stash canned goods in their basements because they are certain that the government is about to

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suspend the constitution and that anarchy will ensue. Don't such stances, as long as they fall short of directly inciting violence, fall under the First Amendment's free-speech protections?

When I posed this question to Potok, he replied: "When we list these groups, we're not predicting that they'll commit violence. We say very explicitly that we're listing them solely on the basis of their ideology. We're foursquare behind the First Amendment. We believe these people can say all these things, but we're going to call them out. We have never suggested restricting any kind of free speech."

To the SPLC's credit—or perhaps in an effort to distance itself gradually from Dees's much-criticized fish-in-a-barrel Klan lawsuits—the center's legal department, which now maintains offices in four other Southern cities besides Montgomery, has branched out substantially into immigrant rights, prison reform, and gay and lesbian issues (although several critics with whom I spoke speculated that the last might represent another of Dees's efforts to tap via mailing lists into a well-off and easily frightened donor base: gays). The SPLC's online list of its legal actions seems thin for a staff of 34 lawyers plus about 36 support-staffers: only 16 new case-filings in 2012 plus 1 in 2013, although Cohen, the center's president and legal director, said the list represents only the tip of a litigation iceberg, and that most of the suits had been preceded by months of laborious investigation.

Some of the legal actions appear to bear the Dees strategical earmarks of cash-strapped defendants plus maximum donor-base appeal: a recently filed fraud lawsuit against an obscure Jewish nonprofit in New Jersey that offers so-called conversion therapy to gays and lesbians hoping to enter traditional heterosexual marriages, and a quick settlement in 2012 of a gay-bullying suit against a school district in a Minneapolis suburb that likely had a limited litigation budget. Another of the SPLC's lawsuits, against the Thompson Academy, a for-profit juvenile facility in Broward County, Florida, whose residents complained about systematic staff mistreatment, was filed in federal court in 2010, then settled on undisclosed terms about a year later. The settlement appeared to accomplish little, however. In 2012, the Broward County Public Defender's office stepped in, filing a series of petitions in state court containing nearly identical allegations to those in the SPLC's suit, and the state of Florida shut down Thompson

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this past January.

Nonetheless, even the SPLC's severest critics give the center's lawyers credit for providing high-quality legal services that have resulted in tangible legal changes. "Their immigration project does some pretty good work, as do some of their other projects," Stephen Bright of the Southern Center for Human Rights conceded. (The SPLC's latest immigration case, filed in February, challenges an Alabama law that requires the state to maintain an online list of immigrants who are arrested and can't prove that they're not "unlawfully present" in the United States; the SPLC argues that the law provides no means for people to get off the list if their immigration status changes.) Michael McDuff, a private criminal defense lawyer in Jackson, Mississippi, worked alongside SPLC staff lawyers on a 2007 lawsuit that resulted in the closing of the Columbia Training School, a girls' juvenile facility where a laundry list of horror stories included alleged improper shackling, sexual abuse, and a lack of psychiatric care for the inmates, many of whom suffered from mental illness. "I'm aware of some of the criticism of the Southern Poverty Law Center," said McDuff, "but Sheila Bedi in their Jackson office just did a terrific job." (Bedi, now a law professor at Northwestern University, headed the SPLC's legal staff in Jackson at the time.) "The SPLC lawyers did a lot of the legal work, and I was pleased to see that they weren't in this case just for the publicity," McDuff continued. "I'm no fan of Morris Dees, but their operation in Mississippi has been terrific."

Dees may indeed have few fans among liberal Southern lawyers—or among liberal journalists who have followed his career closely. Still, just as the SPLC's Northern donors have yet to realize that the days of flaming crosses in the South are done, the Northern legal establishment has yet to realize that Dees's claim to fame may lie primarily in his indisputable genius at self-promotion. Dees parlayed his Ku Klux Klan forays into an NBC made-for-TV movie titled *Line of Fire* in 1991 and his lawsuit against Tom Metzger into a PBS special titled *Hate on Trial* in 1992. Universities have showered him with more than 20 honorary degrees, and organizations ranging from Trial Lawyers for Public Justice to the National Education Association have feted him with awards.

In 2011 the Gruber Foundation, headquartered at Yale, awarded Dees its coveted Justice Prize, citing, yes, one more time, that \$7 million verdict the SPLC won in 1987 against the United Klans of America. In August 2012 the American Bar Association presented him with the ABA Medal, the organization's highest award, "for exceptionally distinguished service by a lawyer or lawyers to the cause of American jurisprudence." (Both the Gruber Foundation and the ABA declined requests for interviews.) At around the time that Dees picked up his medal from the ABA last summer, the Obama Justice Department hosted him as a featured speaker at a "diversity training event" for some of its employees in Washington, where a DOJ staffer picked him up at the airport and took him out to dinner with his family, according to emails obtained by the conservative group Judicial Watch under a Freedom of Information Act request.

Still, there may soon come a day when the SPLC's donation-generating machine, powered by Dees's mastery of the use of "hate" to coax dollars from the highly educated and the highly gullible, finally breaks down. That is why, according to Cohen, the SPLC has no intention of soon spending down much of that \$256 million in stockpiled assets that has earned the center an "F" rating from CharityWatch. "We've tried to raise a substantial endowment, because our fundraising is on a downward trend," Cohen told me. "Those 1960s liberals—they're getting older, and the post office is dying. We're likely to be out of the fundraising business within 10 years." What the SPLC wants to do is to ensure that "hate" is forever.

*Charlotte Allen, a frequent contributor to The Weekly Standard, last wrote on Attorney General Eric Holder.*

**Web Link:** <http://www.weeklystandard.com/article/714573>

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## Another Killer Cites the Southern Poverty Law Center



9:35 AM, FEB 11, 2015 | By MARK HEMINGWAY

The tragic slaying of three Muslims in North Carolina is understandably dominating the headlines this morning. According to his facebook page, the killer was a devout atheist and political liberal. I think it's very rarely helpful or fair to connect political beliefs to the acts of possibly deranged or mentally ill individuals, and thankfully some of the smarter liberal commentators such as Steve Benen agree with me on this point. And Benen was also [correct to point out](#) that some on the right have been too quick to blame politics as a motive for individual killings, such as when some conservatives engaged in overheated finger-pointing at New York's liberal mayor Bill deBlasio after two NYPD officers were killed in December.

However, I do think it's fair to say that attributing political motives to individual killings is much more of a phenomenon on the left. In recent years, liberal organizations and commentators have gone out of their way to connect mainstream conservative political beliefs to violence, and more often than not, such connections are dubious or nonexistent. Back in 2011, I addressed this unseemly tendency of the left in the wake of the Anders Brevik killings with "[Debunking the Left-Wing Myths About 'Right-Wing, Extremist Christians.'](#)"

One of the prime perpetrators of these political smears is the Southern Poverty Law Center, which has devolved from an organization that once combatted real hate groups such as the KKK to a pathetic racket that trades on its former reputation to smear people such as Ben Carson as "[extremist.](#)" The SPLC, has among other things, blamed Sarah Palin's political rhetoric for providing a "a facilitating context" for the shooting of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords by a man who is quite clearly mentally ill and barely registered discernible political opinions. Of course, when another killer shot a security guard and was intent of starting a killing spree at the

mainstream Christian organization Family Research Council he told the FBI that he found the organization listed on a "hate map" on the SPLC's website. What was [SPLC's response to this awkward revelation](#) they were associated with this terrible crime?:

*"Well, first of all, having a group on our hate map doesn't cause anybody to attack them any more than they attacked us for one thing or another," Dees told CNSNews.com on August 6. It takes quite a bit of hubris for Dees to defensively equate rhetorical attacks on his own organization with actual gun violence against an organization whose politics he dislikes. It also seems more than a little convenient that Dees now denies a connection between rhetoric and violence. In 2011, an SPLC blog post, "Expert: Political Rhetoric Likely a Factor in Arizona Shooting," concluded that Sarah Palin's rhetoric "could have provided a facilitating context" for the Giffords shooting, though, again, there is no evidence Loughner was exposed to it.*

*By the loose standard of "facilitating context," the unjust inclusion of the Family Research Council headquarters on a "hate map" otherwise filled with violent white nationalist organizations is a much more serious transgression—particularly when Corkins admits he used the map to learn about his target. And while Leo Johnson's defining characteristics are his courage and character, as long as we're talking about context, it's worth pondering why the founder of a celebrated civil rights organization is obdurately unreflective about the role his SPLC played in the shooting of a black man.*

Which brings us to [the Facebook page of the North Carolina killer](#), which suggests he wasn't remotely neutral when it comes to his atheist and liberal political opinions:

*His Facebook Likes included the Huffington Post, Rachel Maddow, the Southern Poverty Law Center, Freedom from Religion Foundation, Bill Nye "The Science Guy," Neil deGrasse Tyson, Gay Marriage groups and similar progressive pages.*

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Somehow if he had liked Sean Hannity and the Southern Baptist Convention instead of Rachel Maddow and the Freedom from Religion Foundation, I don't think we would see the media restraint we're seeing when it comes to connecting this killer's politics to his terrible deeds.

And again, I would note the irony of his fondness for the Southern Poverty Law Center. By the SPLC's own logic, the SPLC shares responsibility for another hate crime. Now that the SPLC has been hoisted by its own petard twice in a few years, I hope the SPLC and other liberal groups act more responsibly the next time they want to blame a tragic crime on someone's personal politics.

**Web Link:** <http://www.weeklystandard.com/article/848241>

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