



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**BRETT HOVINGTON
OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS, COMMUNITY RELATIONS UNIT
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

**BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING, AND
TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

**AT A HEARING ENTITLED
“WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO DISRUPT TERROR PLOTS”**

PRESENTED

MARCH 17, 2010

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Brett Hovington
Office of Public Affairs, Community Relations Unit
Federal Bureau of Investigation**

**Before the
Subcommittee on Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment
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Good afternoon Chairwoman Harman, Ranking Member McCaul, and distinguished Members of the Subcommittee. I am happy to join with my colleagues here from the Department of Homeland Security and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Office.

As Chief of the Community Relations Unit of the FBI's Office of Public Affairs, I appreciate this opportunity to discuss the FBI's community outreach and engagement efforts, particularly our efforts to build trust and open a constructive dialogue with American Arab, Muslim, Sikh, Somali, and South Asian communities, to name but a few.

The primary purpose of the FBI's Community Outreach Program is simple: to enhance public trust and confidence in the FBI by fostering the FBI's relationship within various communities. The Community Outreach Program supports the FBI's mission by educating members of the public on how they can help protect themselves and their communities. Our engagement efforts are designed to build trust in communities that can assist in opening doors,

facilitating the overall mission of the FBI in keeping communities and the homeland safe. If the public understands the FBI's mission and views the FBI as cooperative and trustworthy, they are more likely to report a crime, return a telephone call or respond positively to being approached by a FBI Special Agent.

I have traveled to Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and many parts of the United States studying the various engagement strategies of law enforcement agencies. One common thread is the need to have better dialogue not just with communities, but specifically with youth. Recent situations involving young people leaving the United States to travel abroad and engage in criminal and nefarious activities is one of the concerns facing the United States today. Though violent radicalization is a growing concern, the overwhelming majority of Muslim Americans we encounter are loyal, law abiding citizens.

If we want to stop future generations of youth from choosing the wrong path and fighting against our country instead of for it, we must commit to increasing our field-based scientific research on the violent radicalization of youth. The only way we can effectively address this issue is to fully understand it. Sociologists, political scientists and psychologists can all help us explore conflict between leaders, community members and youth.

As a Special Agent, I can attest that an individual's understanding and perception of the FBI can make everything we do easier or harder. As we see more instances of individuals in the United States being radicalized to commit violent acts, our efforts to build understanding and trust becomes more critical than ever.

Outreach at the National Level

The FBI engages national and local organizations in the United States that have public positions against terrorism and violent radicalization to further a positive image of law enforcement. The FBI has established contacts with a variety of national-level Arab-American and Muslim organizations. FBI Director Mueller meets with leaders of these groups and has found these interactions to be mutually beneficial. We look to these organizations to assist us in communicating with their members and constituents. For example, to provide an understanding of the FBI's investigative parameters prior to implementation of the new Attorney General's Guidelines for Domestic Operations, we offered these organizations briefings and attempted to address concerns raised by the groups. Our intent was to provide them with information to place the FBI's efforts in context when issues arose publicly.

Outreach Efforts at the Local Level

Each of our 56 field offices has a Community Outreach Program coordinated by a professional Community Outreach Specialist or Special Agent Community Outreach Coordinator. Our Community Outreach Program has several elements: building relationships with community leaders; reaching out to youth and the broader community; and partnering with various community organizations and other law enforcement outreach efforts. As we do at the national level, field offices identify and develop relationships with community leaders and other individuals who have influence in their communities and may be helpful conduits of information to the community at large.

These leaders make up a network of contacts the field office can reach out to on short notice to deliver a message to their community in the event there is a threat or operational activity impacting that community. This network of contacts is also helpful when the FBI needs public assistance to support an ongoing investigation, to address concerns about FBI activities reported in the news media, or to provide additional details on information released by the FBI, such as crime statistics. For example:

- In Detroit, the executive management, including the Special Agent in Charge, attends regular meetings in the Muslim communities. They also have individuals from the Muslim Community who participate in the Multi-Cultural Advisory Councils, FBI Citizens' Academies and the FBI Teen Academy.
- In the fall of 2009, the Assistant Director of the New York Office met with 40 Muslim community leaders to address the issues and concerns of the community following operational activities in the investigation of Najibullah Zazi. This kind of dialogue has become part of our set operations plan.

Field offices use various initiatives to develop and maintain their liaison with community leaders and groups. Thirty-eight of our field offices have established Community Engagement Councils or Multi-Cultural Advisory Councils that consult with field office leadership on areas of interest or concern in the community.

Another key initiative is the Citizens' Academy. This effort is an eight to ten week program that brings together community leaders to learn about the FBI's mission, jurisdiction, policies and general operations. All field offices conduct at least one Citizens' Academy per

year, while some may conduct multiple sessions. A strong effort is made to attract a diversity of members that represent the surrounding communities to these classes.

After a member of the Turkish-American community graduated from the Knoxville office's Citizens' Academy in 2009, the partnership blossomed, and now the Turkish community will be hosting a session of this year's Citizens' Academy. They will also be participating during the next Youth Academy, which will include students from 25 different high schools.

Another program used to foster relationships within various communities is the Community Relations Executive Seminar Training or CREST. While not as in-depth as Citizen Academies, this program provides a vehicle to reach out to communities where trust in the government or the FBI in particular needs to be enhanced. Topics addressed in a CREST session vary according to the interests of the group, discussing such areas as civil rights, hate crimes or terrorism.

The effectiveness of the CREST program is that it is often the starting point for bridging the gaps of trust that may exist between the FBI and a given community. In the context of countering violent radicalization, a key step is to develop relationships within the community based on trust and to do so under non-stressful circumstances rather than in the aftermath of an incident. CREST is a first step in that building process.

In addition to the Citizens' Academy and CREST programs, many field offices have held town-hall style meetings to help foster dialogue with the broader community. Some examples of the communities the FBI has engaged in this way are:

- The Atlanta office held a town hall meeting for the Muslim community at the Hamza Center in Alpharetta, Georgia.
- The Buffalo office partnered with the Muslim Public Affairs Council of Western New York to host a town hall meeting with the Special Agent in Charge and an Assistant U.S. Attorney present.
- The New Haven office held town hall meetings with the Pakistani-American Public Affairs Committee (PAKPAC).
- The San Antonio office participated in an open forum for a group of refugees from Somalia, Tanzania and Iran, expressing encouragement to those in attendance that local/federal agencies were available to assist with any concerns or issues.

FBI field offices also partner with community outreach programs run by state and local law enforcement agencies. Since 2006, the Dallas FBI office and Arlington Police have held joint quarterly meetings with leaders of the Muslim Community in Tarrant County. The meetings are a collaborative effort of the FBI and Arlington Police to engage the Muslim community leadership.

Both the Citizens' Academy and CREST graduates -- along with our local law enforcement partners -- are the foundation of a community support network that works as a force multiplier for us. By working through this local foundation, we are able to model a more traditional community policing effort to combat violent radicalization and terrorism.

Specialized Community Outreach Team (SCOT)

In November 2008, the Community Relations Unit established a Specialized Community Outreach Team. The team, comprised of Special Agents, Analysts, Community Outreach Specialists, and personnel with language or other specialized skills, assists field offices with establishing new contacts in key communities. The pilot program focused on establishing contacts in the Somali-American communities of Denver, Columbus, Minneapolis, San Diego, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. These cities were selected because they were identified as the largest Somali-American communities in the United States. The intent of this new engagement strategy is to use the best practices in community outreach and tailor them to assist in efforts to engage communities that are particularly insular or where barriers of fear or suspicion of law enforcement exist. In the pilot program field offices were helped to develop relationships with organizations and individuals in the Somali community who are well positioned to fill outreach gaps and assist in developing a more positive dialogue with the community.

Outreach to Youth

The FBI continues to adapt our established youth programs to help us reach new groups of young people, particularly in Muslim communities. Field offices sponsor teen academies which are designed to introduce youth to the FBI. We also have the Adopt-a-School/Junior Special Agent program, which is designed to introduce youth to the FBI and to encourage good citizenship. Here are just a few examples:

-- As a part of the FBI Adopt-a-School Program, the Phoenix office hosted a Jr. Special Agent Program at the Arizona Cultural Academy, an Islamic private school. A series of

topics presented for the youth were: Making Good Decisions, Peer Pressure, Internet Safety, Violence Prevention, Self-Esteem, and Teasing and Rumors.

- The New York office participated in a Pakistani Youth Group event held by the Council of People's Organization (COPPO) in Brooklyn.
- Agents from the San Antonio office delivered an internet safety presentation to 300 middle school students at a predominately Turkish run school, Harmony Science Academy.
- Agents from the Atlanta office participated in Career Day at Dar-Un-Noor School, which is also a part of the Al Farooq Masjid, the largest mosque in Atlanta, Georgia.

Recognizing Our Partners

Our community partners have become a bridge to many who viewed the FBI with either contempt or fear. They now come through the doors of the FBI and feel free to share their views on sensitive issues. We commend our friends for their efforts, and we commend the leaders of minority and ethnic communities who have also become friends with the FBI and who are building similar relationships for their communities.

While we realize we are going to have disagreements with these same communities, we are talking. Sparking that dialogue is essential. The leadership of the American Muslim community is working vigorously on many levels to emphasize that American Muslims are Americans. The opportunity to cooperate with the FBI and other authorities can ensure the safety and security of communities and the United States.

One way we can formally recognize the FBI's partners across the country is through the Director's Community Leadership Award. In 2009, four recipients of this award were Muslim leaders. 2008 Muslim Recipients included: Yahya Hendi, Bilal Eksili, Dafer Mohammed Dakhil, and Mohammed Moinuddin. This year's recipients include five Muslim leaders, including: Dr. Saeed Fahia, Josefina Salma Ahmed, Bilah A. Khaleeq, and Mohamed Abdul-Azeez. The fifth recipient, Nawar Shora from the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee, provided training to community outreach personnel from all 56 field offices at our annual training conference last year. This year's recipients will be coming to FBI headquarters this week to be formally recognized by FBI Director Robert Mueller for their outstanding contributions to public safety.

Conclusion

In my remarks I hope I conveyed to the committee the FBI's strategy to engage communities, counter violent radicalization and the methods we use. The process requires building trust within the community, followed by creating strong and open partnerships. Achieving these elements we can then seek to positively influence change in the community and alter the path towards violent radicalization.

I thank the Chairman and the Members of the Committee for their interest in this important issue affecting our nation and look forward to answering your questions.

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