

UNCLASSIFIED



Department of Justice

STATEMENT OF

**MICHAEL STEINBACH
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION**

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON CRIME, TERRORISM,
HOMELAND SECURITY, AND INVESTIGATIONS
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**

ENTITLED

“ISLAMIC STATE & DOMESTIC TERRORISM”

PRESENTED

FEBRUARY 26, 2015

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED



**Statement of Michael Steinbach
Assistant Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation**

**Before the
Committee on the Judiciary
Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security, and Investigations
United States House of Representatives**

**At a Hearing Entitled
“Islamic State & Domestic Terrorism”
Presented
February 26, 2015**

Good morning Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Lee, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the dynamic threat posed by foreign fighters traveling in support of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the continued threat to the United States posed by homegrown violent extremists. These threats remain one of the biggest priorities for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Intelligence Community (IC), and our foreign, state and local partners. I am pleased to be here today with strong state and local partners - Charlotte, North Carolina Police Chief, Rodney Monroe and Hennepin County, Minneapolis, Minnesota Sheriff Richard Stanek.

As you know, the conflict in Syria and Iraq is currently the most attractive overseas theater for Western-based extremists who want to engage in violence. We estimate upwards of 150 Americans have traveled or attempted to travel to Syria to join extremist groups. While this number is small in comparison to the number of European travelers, we must also consider the influence groups like ISIL have on individuals located in the United States who can be inspired to commit acts of violence. It is this blending of homegrown violent extremism with the foreign fighter ideology that is today's latest adaptation of the threat.

ISIL has proven to be relentless and continues to terrorize individuals in Syria and Iraq, including Westerners. We are concerned about the possibility of homegrown extremists becoming radicalized by information available on the Internet. ISIL's widespread reach through the Internet and social media is most concerning as the group has proven dangerously competent at employing such tools for its nefarious strategy. ISIL utilizes high-quality, traditional media platforms, as well as widespread social media campaigns to propagate its extremist ideas. Recently released propaganda has included various English language publications circulated via social media. Several videos of ISIL-held hostages and videos glorifying ISIL members have also been released.

UNCLASSIFIED

UNCLASSIFIED

As a communications tool, the Internet remains a critical node for terror groups to exploit. Recently, a group of five individuals was arrested for knowingly and willingly conspiring and attempting to provide material support and resources to designated foreign terrorist organizations active in Syria and Iraq. Much of their conspiracy occurred via the Internet. We remain concerned about recent calls to action by ISIL and its supporters on violent extremist web forums that could potentially motivate homegrown extremists to conduct attacks here at home. Online supporters of ISIL have used various social media platforms to call for retaliation against the U.S. In one case, an Ohio-based man was arrested in January after he stated his intent to conduct an attack on the U.S. Capitol building. The individual used a Twitter account to post statements, videos, and other content indicating support for ISIL.

Echoing other terrorist groups, ISIL has advocated for lone wolf attacks. This past January, ISIL released a video via social media networking sites reiterating the group's support of lone offender attacks in Western countries. This video specifically advocates for attacks against soldiers, law enforcement and intelligence members. Several incidents have occurred in the United States and Europe over the last few months that indicate this "call to arms" has resonated among ISIL supporters and sympathizers.

Our partners in Australia, Canada, France, and the United Kingdom (UK) have recently disrupted plotting and, unfortunately, had security officers attacked by individuals linked to ISIL or other forms of violent extremism. A French national, who took hostages in Paris and shot and killed a policewoman in early January, claimed he was an ISIL supporter. In December 2014, another French national entered a police station in France and began stabbing police officers before being killed by police. Two separate attacks in Canada in October 2014 targeted Canadian soldiers. Additionally, in September and October, the UK and Australian authorities separately thwarted attacks targeting local law enforcement.

Soon after the January attacks in France, authorities in Belgium conducted a raid against several individuals who were allegedly planning an attack against police personnel. These individuals purportedly had ties to ISIL and allegedly had some connections to the individuals responsible for the attacks in Paris. Our European partners remain on heightened alert and continue to take the necessary steps to mitigate imminent threats. Additionally, last week an individual in Copenhagen attacked a café and a synagogue before dying in a shootout with law enforcement. The individual reportedly pledged allegiance to ISIL before conducting the attack.

The recent events in Europe also underscore our need to remain vigilant here at home, as these small scale attacks are feasible within the United States. Individuals inspired by foreign terrorist groups could quietly arm themselves with the expertise and tools to carry out an attack. Community and world events may trigger one of these individuals to take action. As we've seen with the highly publicized events of the attack on the military at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Canada and the hostage situation at a café in Australia, any attempt at an act of terror will attract international media attention. We remain concerned these types of events, which were widely broadcast, could inspire "copy cat" attacks.

UNCLASSIFIED

The idea of carrying out small scale attacks is not new. In addition to ISIL's online propaganda encouraging attacks on Western interests in any manner possible, al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) has also promoted conducting attacks using simple and inexpensive methods. AQAP continues to pose a threat to the United States and our interests overseas. AQAP's online English magazine *Inspire* advocates for lone wolves to conduct attacks against the U.S. homeland and Western targets and once again highlighted some ways to do so in the recent edition released on December 24, 2014. As with the previous editions, the magazine encourages homegrown violent extremists to carry out small arms attacks and provides detailed "how to" instructions for constructing and deploying a successful bomb.

In conjunction with our domestic and foreign partners, we are rigorously collecting and analyzing intelligence information as it pertains to the ongoing threat posed by ISIL, AQAP, and other foreign terrorist organizations. Given the global impact of the Syria and Iraq conflicts, regular engagement with our domestic and foreign partners concerning foreign fighters is critical.

The FBI, along with our local, state, and federal partners, is utilizing all investigative techniques and methods to combat the threat these individuals may pose to the United States. We must maintain robust information sharing and close collaboration with our state, local, and federal partners. Individuals who are affiliated with a foreign terrorist organization, inspired by a foreign terrorist organization, or who are self-radicalized are living in their communities. We at the FBI recognize it is our responsibility to share information pertaining to ongoing or emerging threats immediately. Our local and state partners rely on this intelligence to conduct their investigations and maintain the safety of their communities. It is our responsibility to provide them with the information and resources to keep their communities out of harm's way. In each of the FBI's 56 Field Offices, the Joint Terrorism Task Forces serve as a vital mechanism for information sharing among our partners. Together with our local, state, and federal partners, we are committed to combating the threat from homegrown violent extremists and ensuring the safety of the American public.

The FBI continues to pursue increased information sharing, efforts to combat radicalization, and exchanges regarding community outreach programs and policing strategies.

Chairman Sensenbrenner, Ranking Member Lee, and Committee Members, I thank you for this opportunity to testify concerning the threat foreign fighters and homegrown extremists pose to the homeland. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.