Statement of

Michael P. Downing
Commanding Officer
Counter-Terrorism/Criminal Intelligence Bureau
Los Angeles Police Department

Before the

Committee on Homeland Security's and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Presented on

October 30, 2007

I. Introduction

Chairman Lieberman, Ranking Member Collins, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD) efforts to identify and counter violent extremism, which happens in this case, to be ideologically based. Local law enforcement has a culture and capacity that no federal agency enjoys - the know-how and ability to engage communities that today are a vital part of the equation. Part of this engagement process is the demonstration of sensitivity to terminology that offends and/or isolates communities, hence, *"Ideologically Based Violent Extremism."*

No agency knows their landscape better than local law enforcement; we were designed and built to be the eyes and ears of communities – the First Preventers of terrorism. What is important to law enforcement is that we carefully and accurately define those who we suspect will commit a criminal-terrorist act within our communities. That job needs to be done with the kind of balance and precision that inspires the support and trust of the American people in order to aid us in the pursuit of our lawful mission.

Prior to 2001, much of America overlooked Muslim communities in the United States (U.S). Iranians who immigrated to the U.S. following the hostage crisis received some media attention but the broader Muslim community in this country was not at the forefront of the national psyche. The reverse is now true as a result of the post-9/11 media coverage and the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. Muslim communities here and abroad have become centerpieces of coverage for the print and broadcast media. While this coverage has, in many cases, helped to educate the American public, it has also put Muslims under a very bright spotlight. Feelings of persecution and vulnerability by large swaths of Muslim communities have created anxiety and uncertainty about the future.

Before 9/11, law enforcement was equally unaware of this community, both at a federal and statewide level. Even with our newfound awareness, law enforcement personnel are working from a disadvantage because of the obstacles we face as we approach wary communities deeply concerned with issues such as the implications of the Patriot Act, racial-profiling in the transportation industry, and the mischaracterization of Islam in the media. High-profile arrests and investigations of violent extremists such as the Fort Dix 6 play into Muslims' fears that they are under increased scrutiny. These underlying dynamics play a role in how these communities interact with all facets of American society, especially law enforcement.

One major role that law enforcement can play in the fight against violent ideological extremism is that of educator. Teaching all communities about the dangers of extreme ideologies can dispel harmful rumors and myths that alienate already pressured communities. We have learned from the European experience how these alienated communities become a breeding ground for violent extremism and a safe haven for potential terrorists to hide among the population.

Granted, the U.S. does not have the same types of problems as England, France, Germany, or Israel. While the tactics terrorists employ are learned behaviors that migrate across national boundaries – through groups, training camps, and the Internet – the underlying motivations for

these violent acts are unique to the host countries. Consequently, the remedies (i.e., jailhouse de-radicalization in Malaysia, the Channel Project in northern England, and the BIRR Project in Australia) are often contextually bounded and dependent on the depth, strength, national allegiance and identity of the native Muslim community.

In Los Angeles, for example, there are many Muslim communities that do not share the same risk profile as those in the United Kingdom as they are much more integrated into the larger society. That said, the European example does provide U.S. law enforcement with a starting point when searching for early indicators of radicalization.

We have learned that Muslim communities in the U.S. are mistrustful of the mainstream media. Therefore, they may turn to other sources of information for news and socialization, such as the Internet. Unfortunately, despite all of the positive aspects of the Internet, it allows those individuals and groups with ideological agendas to easily make contact with like-minded individuals and access potentially destructive information.

As we move from the virtual to the physical, it is important to apply the hard-won lessons we have learned in combating gang crime to the problem of terrorism. Southern California was the birthplace of gang culture and in Los Angeles we are all too familiar with the threat of violent crime by street gangs. Regardless of how many police officers we deploy, we can only suppress specific incidents. While more police are part of the answer, the real solution lies in the community – with the strengthening of the family structure and the economic base; and the weakening of political power bases built on victimization and a cultural tolerance of violence. The problem of violent street gangs is based on deep community structures. However, so are the solution sets of youth-at-risk programs, parenting classes, economic infusion, job training, community activism against violence and religion-based interventions.

While it might seem counter-intuitive, the isolation of Muslim communities acts both as a wall and as a self-regulator. Similar to gangs, the signs of extremism are first seen on the most local levels: in the families, neighborhoods, schools, mosques, and work places. The wall built by the community is the barrier created to sustain cultural identity and values and protect against the pace of assimilation.

II. LAPD Strategies and Initiatives

One of the biggest challenges for law enforcement in this environment is separating political jihadists (i.e., those who intentionally plant seeds of division in an effort to alienate and isolate Muslim citizens from the rest of society) from legitimate actors. Teaching all communities about the dangers of extreme ideologies can dispel harmful rumors and myths that alienate already pressured communities. The LAPD has done much outreach in this area, both with Muslim and non-Muslim communities. For the 18 months, we have been involved in outreach and grassroots dialogue with Muslim communities, bringing the entire command staff to observe, learn, engage and, most importantly, listen. This has helped to build more robust trust networks at the divisional level of police service. One of our goals is to be viewed as trusted friends by Muslim communities in our city.

Our outreach to the non-Muslim community has combined education with prevention. We now have Terrorism Liaison Officers (TLOs) at all of our divisions and Fire Stations who serve as the principal points of contact for terrorism information and intelligence. These liaison officers educate Department personnel and the broader community about the indicators of violent extremism and have proven to be critical assets when it comes to raising the level of terrorism prevention and preparedness.

The education provided by the TLOs has been supplemented with training by outside experts. Within our ranks, we have worked to educate our officers in the Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau about Islam and the cultural sensitivities they should be aware of when they are in the field. Approaching Muslims with respect and integrity is a large piece of the counter-narrative that law enforcement can write for itself.

The LAPD must have the capability to hunt for signs of radicalization and terrorism activities on the Internet. We recently started a cyber investigations unit to do just that. The Internet is the virtual hangout for radicals and terrorists. It provides a plain-view means of identifying and gathering information on potential threats. Information gleaned from this open source, fed into the radicalization template, and combined with a thorough understanding of operational indicators, is critical to articulating suspicion and justifying the increased application of enforcement measures.

LAPD's Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau initiatives for both the present and future have aligned people, purpose, and strategy around the mission of building capacity to hunt and disrupt operational capability on the part of terrorists (recruiting, funding, planning, surveilling, and executing operations). However, just as important, we have aligned our resources to focus on the motivational side of the terrorist equation and have made great efforts and organizing, mobilizing and in partnership, raising the moderate Muslim voice to prevent the extremists from making inroads into this faith community. A few of these strategies are described below:

? Working in concert with our seven county regional and federal partners, we continue to build capacity to collect, fuse, analyze, and disseminate both strategic and operational intelligence. We are aligning our intelligence collection and dissemination process with an eye toward accountability and ensuring that our First Preventers have the information they need when they need it.

? Our Terrorism Liaison Officers are casting an ever-wider safety net to train more people in the city to be public data collectors and First Preventers.

? We have started a Muslim outreach program with our command staff to leverage resources, institutionalize the idea of developing the counter-narrative, and facilitate an educational process. In developing this counter-narrative, the goal is to inspire Muslim communities to responsibly partner with law enforcement to protect American values. We also aim to elevate the moderate Muslim voice and empower people to counter the extremist ideology with confidence. This enables community

leadership to assist law enforcement in identifying those individuals and groups who espouse extremism and work to divide Muslim communities from American society.

? We are working with a think tank to develop a training program for mid-level executives that will be tailored specifically to state and local law enforcers. It is our hope that this will develop into a model for a national counter-terrorism academy.

? We initiated the Regional Public Private Infrastructure Collaboration System – a tool that enhances communication between and within LAPD and the Private Sector.

? Our Archangel program is a Critical Infrastructure Protection System that includes a Protective Security Task Force.

? We are developing a Cyber Investigation Unit to hunt violent extremists on the Internet.

? Our Community Mapping project is described below in Section V.

III. A Different Problem

In contrast to much of Europe, which has suffered from a marked increase in violence and violent intentions – often by its own citizens, the problem we face in the U.S is mainly political. There are those among us, I call them political jihadists, who are attempting to create division, alienation, and a sense of persecution in Muslim communities in order to create a cause. They are the nemesis of community engagement. Their purpose is to create the conditions that facilitate the radicalization process for international political causes.

Law enforcement's *ultimate* goal is to engender the continued loyalty and good citizenship of American-Muslims – not merely disrupt terrorist activities. Let me be clear, I am not saying that law enforcement should relax its effort to hunt down and neutralize small numbers of "clusters" on the criminal side of the radicalization trajectory. That task remains, and must be done with precision and must also be carried out in the context of what is ultimately valuable. What good is it to disrupt a group planning a mall bombing if the enforcement method is so unreasonable that it is widely criticized and encourages many more to enter the radicalization process?

The point is not merely an academic one—it has operational consequence. In preserving good will and by in by Muslim communities, law enforcement is, in fact, advancing its intelligence agenda by fostering an environment that maximizes tips and leads surfacing from those same communities. The long-term solution to this radicalization problem will come from Muslim communities themselves.

The natural question is: What factors put a community at-risk? Taking a page from the European experience, diaspora communities are in transition from one culture to another, making its members particularly vulnerable to identity crises which may be very easily subverted by ideologues. As Eric Hoffer wrote in his book, "The True Believer: Thoughts on the Nature of

Mass Movements": "Faith in a holy cause is to a considerable extent a substitute for the lost faith in ourselves." If there is a real or perceived threat of discrimination between the new community and the host, then an "us against them" mentality may prevail making that final step towards radicalization that much easier. Some Muslim communities may view any local discrimination as linked to Muslim causes globally, and vice versa, any discrimination against the *Ummah* (the global Muslim community) may be felt locally.

The Pakistani-British community in the United Kingdom is a diaspora, which is significant, because it makes the 2nd and 3rd generations of the community particularly vulnerable to the social pressures of growing up in a country very different from their parents' and grandparents' homeland. As a diaspora community, they remain transnational, tending to maintain close family, social, and financial ties with Pakistan. Globalization allows a diaspora to maintain these transnational contacts via faster, cheaper air travel, global communications technology (Internet and cell phone), global mass media, and nearly instant transnational banking. If the first two risk factors are present, then one must ask, "Does the community also hail from an unstable homeland with Wahabbi-Salafi ties?" If so, that community, like the British-Pakistani Muslim community, might be at greater risk of incubating homegrown radicalization.

If social factors - such as enclaves where residents are culturally and linguistically isolated - contribute to radicalization, it is important for law enforcement to be aware of those potentially vulnerable communities. This is part of our next step. We want to map the locations of these closed, vulnerable communities, and in partnership with these communities, infuse social services that will help the people who live there while weaving these enclaves into the fabric of the larger society. While the role of the law enforcer is not one of religious scholar or social worker, there is the potential to build and strengthen bridges from communities to those resources. It is then we will know where to find our Pakistani, Iranian, Somali, Chechen, Jordanian, and North African communities and thus understand how better to support their integration into the greater society. It is then that local law enforcement becomes an enabler.

IV. Legitimacy and Constitutionality

It is our position that legitimacy and intelligence are equally important tools for U.S. law enforcement to use in counter-terrorism efforts. Legitimacy starts with an organizational knowledge and pride in operating constitutionally and within the law. The need for transparency – being perceived to be and authentically honoring this principle – in intelligence and counter-terrorism activities cannot be understated. Taking great care to ensure that intelligence and enforcement operations are narrowly targeted against terrorist cells determined to go operational is critical. Law enforcement and its advocates must also avoid name-calling exchanges with political jihadists, opting instead to engage them professionally on specific issues. Political jihadists will reveal themselves in these exchanges by being unreasonable and unable to articulate specific grievances, preferring instead to use personal attacks and blanket accusations. In doing so, they are failing in their purpose to attract converts.

Community policing initiatives in Muslim communities should aim to create a shared sense of threat: society as a whole fears the indiscriminate, mass violence we are seeing around the world. All forms of communication with the public (whether analytical reports or post-incident news conferences) should address this fear. In summary, law enforcement's most pressing

challenge is to shield the public from this threat, while not advancing the purpose of political jihadists. It is a difficult balance to achieve, however, raising the moderate Muslim voice and creating the counter-narrative that offsets the fanatical trajectory of radicalization.

The LAPD has created the Counter-Terrorism and Criminal Intelligence Bureau with nearly 300 officers who are solely dedicated to counter-terrorism, criminal intelligence gathering, and community building. Policing terrorism must be a convergent strategy that enhances the fight against crime and disorder. In building the resistance to crime and disorder, we create hostile environments to terrorists.

V. Community Mapping

We need to understand the problem as it exists in Los Angeles before we roll out programs to mitigate radicalization. Historically, the temptation has been to turn to intervention programs before we have clearly identified problems within the community. In the past we have relied on interventions based on "experts," logic or previous programs that are either generic or insensitive to the constellation of issues. This has consistently produced unremarkable results. Public safety pays a high cost for this business practice. This is one of many reasons to support the rationale behind community mapping, a process that delivers a richer picture and road map that can guide future strategies.

In order to give our officers increased awareness of our local Muslim communities, the LAPD recently launched an initiative with an academic institution to conduct an extensive "community mapping" project. We are also soliciting input of local Muslim groups, so the process can be transparent and inclusive. While this project will lay out the geographic locations of the many different Muslim population groups around Los Angeles, we also intend to take a deeper look at their history, demographics, language, culture, ethnic breakdown, socio-economic status, and social interactions. It is our hope to identify communities, within the larger Muslim community, which may be susceptible to violent ideologically-based extremism and then use a full-spectrum approach guided by an intelligence-led strategy.

Community mapping is the start of a conversation, not just data sets: It is law enforcement identifying with its community and the community identifying with its families, neighborhoods, city, state, country and police. For the past 18 months, the LAPD's outreach and grassroots dialogue with Muslim communities has helped the entire command staff to observe, learn, engage and, most importantly, listen. This has helped to build more robust trust networks at the divisional level of the police service area.

Without a community mapping blueprint and methodical community engagement strategy, our outreach efforts will be sporadic. Our counter-narrative will be empty of meaning, leaving us talking about, rather than talking with, this community.

VI. Conclusion – The Evolving Threat

We need to show that our democratic principles built on the values, practices, and lives of American citizens are sacred and worthy of embracing. We need to show our belief in human dignity, the family and the value of the individual. We need to show how we honor the meaning of our lives by what we contribute to others' lives. We need to show that behind the badges of American law enforcement are caring Americans "doing" law enforcement. To do this we need to go into the community and get to know peoples' names. We need to walk into homes, neighborhoods, mosques, and businesses. We need to know how Islam expresses itself in Los Angeles if we expect to forge bonds of community support. The LAPD has been involved in this process and we are now ready to evolve our outreach to a more sophisticated and strategic level.

The U.S. faces a vicious, amorphous, and unfamiliar adversary on our land. The principal threats will be local, self-generating and self-directed. If there are direct connections with overseas groups, these are most likely to be initiated by the local actors. Cases in point include the 7/7 bombers, the Glasgow car bombers, and, more locally, Lodi in which local individuals and groups sought out training in Pakistan. This is not intended to dismiss threats that emerge from overseas locations, which should continue to be of concern. Rather, it is an estimate of relative density—locally generated threats will manifest themselves with greater frequency.

Ultimately, preventing extremism will be up to neighborhoods and communities, but thread by thread, relationship by relationship, the police can help build a network of services and relationships that will make it very hard for terrorism to take root. American Muslim neighborhoods and communities have a genuine responsibility in preventing any form of extremism and terrorism. If the broader communities are intolerant of such things, these ideologies cannot take root in its midst. I believe no amount of enforcement or intelligence can ultimately prevent extremism if the communities are not committed to working with law enforcement to prevent it.