

**Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee Hearing
“Violent Islamist Extremism: Government Efforts to Defeat It”
Washington, DC
May 10, 2007**

Today’s hearing – our fourth on Islamist radicalization – takes on a special sense of urgency with the arrests Tuesday of six would be terrorists who are accused of plotting to force their way into Fort Dix with automatic assault rifles to kill as many American soldiers as possible.

According to the FBI’s affidavit, the perpetrators thought the death toll could reach into the hundreds.

These six were not radicalized in faraway extremist madrasahs, nor did they receive their weapons or tactical training at Al Qaeda camps in distant mountains.

The accused New Jersey terrorists were radicalized and planned and trained for their attack right here in the United States, according to the FBI. They were propagandized and instructed with videos either downloaded from the Internet or passed from computer to computer on DVDs.

Though there is no evidence at this time of an operational link to Al Qaeda, there is quite clearly an ideological link – Osama bin Laden’s radical message reached across cyberspace and traditional borders and poisoned the hearts and minds of these men in New Jersey.

This is not the first terrorist plot against the U.S. since 9-11 to be stopped before it could be carried out, and it most surely will not be the last to be attempted. It is another wake-up call to the American people that there are people in this world who so hate our American way of life that they are intent on wantonly killing Americans.

These arrests in New Jersey remind us that the work we have done since 9-11 through this Committee to create the Department of Homeland Security, reform our intelligence agencies, protect our borders, and strengthen our law enforcement agencies' anti-terrorist capabilities has been absolutely necessary. And there is much more we need to do.

The topic of today's hearing is ""Violent Islamist Extremism: Government Efforts to Defeat It.""

It follows our Committee's earlier hearings into Islamist radicalization within U.S. prisons and over the Internet.

Today we want to ask representatives of relevant federal government agencies what they are doing to combat such radicalization, at home and abroad because what happens abroad can and does affect what will happen here at home.

We have long taken comfort from a confidence that our best hope for preventing Islamist radicalization and terrorism within America and by Americans was America itself – the openness and opportunity and the freedom of speech and religion that our country provides.

We have always felt that our best hope for preventing Islamist radicalization and terrorism within America and by Americans was America itself – the openness and opportunity for upward mobility our country provides.

We have thought that American Muslims were more fully integrated into American society than Muslim communities in Europe, for instance, and therefore that the threat of homegrown Islamist extremism was smaller or even nonexistent here than elsewhere.

I believe that remains true but, obviously, not for all Muslims in America, as the case of the Fort Dix six shows.

These were young men working their way up in America, owning businesses, buying homes, going to college, and raising families. And yet, according to the affidavit filed by the FBI, they became so hostile to this country that welcomed them and gave them opportunities that they planned to attack it.

This morning we will ask our witnesses why they believe this happened, how we can prevent such radicalization here at home, and if we can't in all cases, how can we stop it before it strikes us. This is an important hearing, and I look forward to the testimony of our witnesses.

Senator Collins.