



Homeland  
Security

September 30, 2011

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Homeland Security  
and Governmental Affairs  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Collins:

Thank you for the recent opportunity to speak before the United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. I wanted to take this opportunity to provide you with further information about how we are coordinating countering violent extremism (CVE) efforts within the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

The threat posed by homegrown violent extremists is real and not limited to a single ideology. We know that foreign terrorist groups affiliated with al-Qa'ida, and individual terrorist thought leaders, are actively seeking to recruit or inspire Westerners to carry out attacks against western and U.S. targets. They seek to recruit and/or inspire individuals living in communities within the United States via print, video, and social media, as well as through personal interaction. DHS has made it a priority to counter all forms of domestic violent extremism, regardless of ideology.

Accordingly, our approach to CVE emphasizes the strength of local communities and begins with the premise that well-informed and equipped families, communities, and local institutions represent the best defense against terrorist ideologies. DHS is focusing its CVE efforts on three broad objectives: 1) supporting and coordinating efforts to better understand the phenomenon of violent extremism, including assessing the threat it poses to the Nation as a whole and within specific communities; 2) bolstering efforts to catalyze and support non-governmental, community-based programs, and strengthening relationships with communities that may be targeted for recruitment by violent extremists; and 3) disrupting and deterring recruitment or individual mobilization through support for local law enforcement programs, including information-driven, community-oriented policing efforts that for decades have proven effective in preventing violent crime.

As part of this effort, DHS is partnering with the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the National Counterterrorism Center, and other government agencies to evaluate the threat posed by homegrown violent extremists and to develop efforts to address those threats.

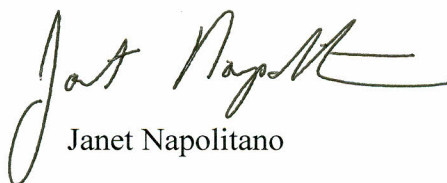
We also work closely with state, local, and tribal governments to integrate terrorism prevention into day-to-day efforts to protect our communities from violent crime. For example, we have increased information sharing between federal, state, local, and private sector authorities, through efforts such as the Nationwide Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) Initiative. Through this initiative, DHS and the Department of Justice have trained over 100,000 frontline officers to better identify terrorism-related suspicious activity. In addition, DHS is working with the interagency, federal, state, and local partners, to examine training quality control, funding, and guiding principles. With these partners, DHS is working to expand current cultural awareness and community engagement training for law enforcement and is in the process of developing a comprehensive CVE curriculum for federal, state, local, and tribal law enforcement focused on a community oriented policing approach to combat violent crime and counter violent extremism.

Furthermore, we have worked to raise public awareness and vigilance of terrorism through initiatives such as the “If You See Something, Say Something <sup>TM</sup>” campaign, which encourages individuals to report suspicious activities to the appropriate state and local law enforcement authorities. All of these initiatives contribute to our Nation’s efforts to counter homegrown violent extremism.

In addition, I have established the Counterterrorism Advisory Board (CTAB) to better coordinate the Department’s operational and programmatic efforts to prevent and protect against foreign and homegrown terrorist attacks. The CTAB will coordinate the Department’s CVE efforts. John Cohen, Principal Deputy Counterterrorism Coordinator and Senior Advisor to the Secretary, has been directed to serve as the Department’s lead on CVE and as the primary point of contact for all CVE-related issues.

If you have specific follow-up questions, Mr. Cohen is available to provide additional briefings. We look forward to continuing to work with your Committee on matters related to CVE.

Yours very truly,



Janet Napolitano