

Opening Statement of Ranking Member  
Senator Susan M. Collins

Homegrown Terrorism: The Threat to Military Communities Inside the United  
States

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs &  
House Committee on Homeland Security  
December 7, 2011

Thank you, Chairman King. Let me first point out that this unusual House-Senate hearing demonstrates our joint concern for the safety of our military personnel and their families, who are increasingly the targets of terrorist plots.

I would also like to recognize the family members here today whose lives have been forever changed by terrorism

Our military service members have been on the front lines in the war against terrorism for 10 years. In Iraq, Afghanistan, and wherever called upon, America's military men and women put their lives on the line for us. We are profoundly grateful to them, and we must work to ensure their lives are not in jeopardy due to insider threats.

Tragically, in recent years, we have seen several attacks from both inside and outside the gates of our military bases. As we have seen with the attacks at Fort Hood, Texas, and at a Little Rock, Arkansas, recruiting center, our military is a target for Islamist extremists in our own country. In a recent report, the Congressional Research Service notes that 23 plots targeting the military have unfolded in just the last 18 months.

How do we identify and stop the next homegrown attack on our military? This effort must be addressed through a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy that carefully differentiates between peaceful, practicing Muslims and violent Islamist extremists.

As Chairman Lieberman and I highlighted in our investigation into the Fort Hood attack, the Administration has been unwilling to name violent Islamist extremism as the ideology driving the main homegrown terrorist threat we face. For example, in response to this Committee's continued interest in the Fort Hood massacre, DoD responded a few weeks ago that it is "dealing with the threat of violent Islamist extremism in the context of a broader threat of workplace violence."

This approach stands in stark contrast to past DoD policies that specifically addressed white supremacist activities after the racially motivated

murders of two African-Americans by two Army soldiers in 1995.

Among the recommendations in the Senate Fort Hood report, we urged that service members “receive specific training concerning the ideology and behaviors associated with violent Islamist extremism – and how they differ from the peaceful practice of Islam.” And yet, a combined House-Senate Committee staff review has confirmed that the only Department-wide instruction to date is the “interim guidance” distributed to commanders on potential “indicators of violent behavior.”

I understand that DoD is moving to develop a long-term policy solution, and that the Army is currently implementing an updated Threat Awareness Reporting Program and associated training. We must arm our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines with the knowledge to differentiate between a peaceful, practicing member of a major esteemed religion and a service member who is radicalizing and poses a potential threat.

Identifying factors that lead to violent radicalization, understanding behaviors that could be indicators of such radicalization, and engaging to stop the radicalization process are all vital components of a comprehensive counterterrorism strategy.

Even our repeated call for a single federal official to coordinate activities against violent Islamist extremism across the entire government has gone unheeded.

Our Committee has been examining the process of radicalization for more than five years. Whether it occurs in prisons or on the Internet - the threat such radicalization poses to our military members must be acknowledged and addressed. The Congressional Research Service’s documentation of 29 plots and three attacks targeting military personnel and bases since September 11<sup>th</sup> requires the full attention of the military and the Administration.

Today’s hearing should serve as a call to accelerate actions to protect those who have put their lives on the line for our freedom. Our service men and women deserve no less.