



**United States Senate**  
**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs**  
Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement for Chairman Joseph Lieberman  
“Nine Years After 9/11: Confronting the Terrorist Threat to the Homeland”  
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee  
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**As Prepared for Delivery**

Good morning. I offer a particular thanks to Secretary Napolitano, Director Mueller and Director Leiter as well. Thank you to the three of you for being here. This is an important hearing. It's the third annual hearing to which we invite the leaders of the three most involved and important agencies in our federal government in protecting us to discuss where we are in defending the American homeland. This includes how the threat has evolved and how our defenses have evolved against it.

And it gives us a kind of annual report—a snapshot, picture—of where we are and what the attacks of the past year say to us about what we can do together to continue to improve the security of the American people post 9/11.

Last week, we marked the 9th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and we paid homage to the 3,000 people who were murdered that day by Islamist extremist terrorists.

I was struck yesterday by reading a Gallup poll in one of the newspapers that showed a significant decrease in concern about terrorism among the American people. Now this is understandable, particularly because of the stress that current economic conditions have put on so many American families. But, as the three witnesses know well, the threat is still all too real, as we on this Committee and the witnesses know well, because it is our job to be focused on protecting our homeland and our country from violent Islamist extremists and terrorists, no matter what the state of public opinion is about it at the moment. That's why, of course, we're so happy and grateful that you're here today.

The tragedy of 9/11 is a daily reality for the three of you and the hundreds of thousands of men and women who work with you every single day to ensure that such an attack never happens again. In some sense, the three of you oversee a mighty force of hundreds of thousands of people who have been reorganized and augmented in the aftermath of 9/11. When the violent Islamist extremists declared war on us, we responded, taking us into two active fields of combat—first in Afghanistan, then Iraq—but also taking us onto unconventional battlefields all across the world and quite significantly, and the focus of our attention today, our homeland and the extent to which this enemy is unlike any we've ever faced. It threatens our security, our way of life, our freedom, and is prepared to do so in extraordinarily inhuman ways right here at home.

Let me just share three observations about what I have seen over the past year.

Since our last threat assessment hearing a year ago, there has been a marked increase in Islamist terrorist acts against us here at home. Most incidents, thank God and thanks to you and all the work you do, have been thwarted - some through extraordinary, almost miraculous work—taking a shred of evidence, building on it, developing it and finding the people who were planning the attack and stopping and capturing them before they did.

But the fact, which I know you know very well, is that in three of the attempted attacks in the last year terrorists managed to break through our defenses. They were different kinds of attacks. First the Fort Hood shooting last November, then the Christmas Day attack and the Times Square bombing attempt. Of course in the

Fort Hood case, 13 people died at the hands of Major Nidal Hasan. Fortunately in the Christmas Day and Times Square attempts, the explosives failed in both cases, and no one was hurt.

These attacks and others show the full range of threats we now face – from lone wolves, freely operating terrorists who may be motivated by terrorist agitators abroad – as was the case of Hasan – to homegrown terror cells such as the so-called Raleigh Seven or the Fort Dix plotters, to inexperienced but potentially deadly operatives – including American citizens – directly trained by al Qaeda or its affiliates around the world as were Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, and Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab, the Christmas Day bomber.

So the first fact that stands out for me is the increased pace of attacks against our homeland in this war—most were thwarted, but three broke through.

Second, since 2009, at least 63 American citizens have been charged or convicted for terrorism or related crimes. Now to me that is an astoundingly high number of American citizens who have attacked – or planned to attack – their own country, our country.

In addition to this number, an increasing number of Americans are now actually in leadership positions in international terrorist groups. Most notable is Anwar al-Awlaki, who through his writings and audiotapes has inspired several plots against the West over the last five years, and in the case of Christmas Day attack, apparently played a direct operational role. Adam Gadahn continues to serve as a chief propagandist for al-Qaeda. They are both Americans with citizenship status. Omar Hammami, from Alabama, a convert to Islam, is featured prominently in al-Shabaab recruiting videos and is identified in the press as an operational commander. Adnan el Shukrijumah, who grew up in the U.S. and has legal permanent resident status, is now a senior al Qaeda operative apparently responsible for the planned attack last year by Najibullah Zazi on the New York subway system.

So this is quite significant to me, that a number of Americans are playing an active role. I know it's a infinitesimal proportion of the American public, but it involves a growing number of Americans and is something to be concerned about in terms of homegrown terrorism and self-radicalization.

The third fact is the growing role of the internet in self-radicalization and homegrown terrorism, which raises the question of what we can do to combat the use of the Internet for these purposes.

Many of those arrested in the last year have been radicalized online, influenced by al Qaeda's core narrative – that the U.S. is at war against Islam – which has been tailored to a western, English-speaking audience by al-Awlaki and other online violent extremists.

The fact is that Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations have adapted their online media strategies to mainstream websites and social networking tools. And that's made it easier for people to access extremist material, and has significantly raised the challenge to our counterterrorism agencies who we count on to discover and disrupt these terrorists' plots.

Those three changing and developing factors jump out at me and I look forward to your response to them. The bottom line fact is that the fight against Islamist extremism and terrorism sure looks like it's going to go on for a long time to come. It is the great security challenge of our time, we must confront it with – in Lincoln's words – “energy and sleepless vigilance” until it is defeated. Again, I thank the three of you and all who work with you for the extraordinary work that you're doing, really 24/7, 365 days a year to make sure that we do succeed in this fight.

Thank you very much. Senator Collins.