STATEMENT BY

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ON

HOMEGROWN TERRORISM:
THE THREAT TO MILITARY COMMUNITIES INSIDE THE UNITED STATES

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INTRODUCTION

The attacks of September 11, 2001, provided a stark warning that analysts had grossly misjudged the nature of the terrorist threat facing the United States. [1] While the ensuing decade of conflict has greatly constrained al-Qa`ida's ability to operate with impunity, the threat from the organization and its affiliated movements has proved far more resilient than anticipated. The rise of new organizations, the alignment of existing groups and the emergence of domestic cells inspired by al-Qa`ida's ideology create a complex tapestry of actors that continues to present a very real and persistent threat to the United States. It is this last category of—homegrown al-Qa'ida inspired violent extremists—that represents perhaps the most unique dimension to this varied and dynamic landscape. Self-organizing and largely autonomous in their operations, these cells challenge the long-held notion that al-Qa`ida is a solely exogenous threat to the United States.

Yet domestic terrorism is not a new phenomenon to the United States. As Brian Jenkins notes, the 1970s witnessed a far greater frequency of terrorist attacks in the United States than in the post-9/11 era. [2] However, the emergence of al-Qa`ida-inspired violent extremism in this country since 2005 marks an environment that did not exist prior to—or even immediately after—9/11. [3] Since 2001, 170 individuals in the United States have radicalized and seeking to conduct attacks. U.S. military members stationed inside the United States have emerged as the most prevalent target selected by al-Qa`ida inspired, homegrown terrorists. In 2011 alone, of the seven publicly acknowledged plots by such groups, six targeted some aspect of the military. The nature of this phenomenon is not well understood nor fully appreciated and deserving of more analysis.

As homegrown terrorism has evolved over the past decade it is significant to note that the vast majority of al-Qa`ida-inspired cells in the United States have, at best, limited contacts with core elements of the organization. This is an increasingly common hallmark of an era in which globalized communication technology has simplified the transmission of ideas from one corner of the world to another, enabling action without connection. However, it is not simply the ease with which ideas are shared today that enables the global jihad, but also the construction of a virtual, global *ummah*—a community of believers—through which individuals can locate personal grievances within a broader framework of dissent. This process ensures that

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[1] This testimony represents the personal opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the United States Military Academy, Department of Defense, or any other government agency. This testimony is based on a fourteen month long, comprehensive research project conducted at West Point by Reid Sawyer and Michael McGee.

[2] Brian Michael Jenkins, *Would-Be Warriors: Incidents of Jihadist Terrorist Radicalization* in the United States Since September 11, 2001. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2010, 8-9.

3 Throughout this testimony, the terms "domestic terrorism," "homegrown terrorism" are used interchangeably. The term "homegrown terrorists" refers to terrorists who have been radicalized in their host country as opposed to those who have been radicalized in another location and then traveled to the West or the United States. Homegrown terrorists range from lone-wolf actors to small, isolated groups with little or no connection to the international jihad to groups whose members together radicalized, trained and connected to international jihadist organizations. This definitional concept is drawn from Kimberley L. Thachuk, Marion E. "Spike" Bowman, and Courtney Richardson, " Homegrown Terrorism: The Threat Within," Center for Technology and National Security Policy, National Defense University, May 2008, 6.

individuals can find meaning in something greater than themselves as they seek to define their level of participation in the movement. Ten years of war in two Muslim countries combined with the rapid proliferation and growing presence of global Salafi extremist jihadist ideology on the Internet has created a charged environment whereby participation in the movement is not dictated by, or restricted to, an individual's country of residence. Today, individuals can "belong" to al-Qa`ida with little or no physical contact with the group itself. These dynamics have enabled the rise of domestic, or homegrown, terrorism within the United States.

Fortunately, numerous law enforcement and intelligence successes against al-Qa`ida and its affiliated have prevented all but a handful of attacks since 9/11. The fact that the United States has not witnessed a *significant* successful terrorist attack since 2001 is a testament to the advances made by the counterterrorism and law enforcement communities. As important and comforting as these metrics may be, the conclusion that al-Qa`ida-directed or -inspired cells are impotent misses two significant and important dimensions of the present threat.

1. Despite the number of failures and the ineptitude displayed by some cells, homegrown terrorists are capable of inflicting significant damage. One need only to look at the March 2004 bombings in Madrid, in which 191 people were killed and more than 1,800 were wounded after homegrown terrorists planted thirteen bombs on four commuter trains, or the July 2005 attack in London, when 56 people were killed and 700 were injured after four suicide attackers detonated bombs on three subways and one double-decker bus, to understand that a homegrown cell can inflict significant damage. The distance between success and failure in domestic terrorist attacks is not as great as many would presume, and even one successful attack can have devastating national effects no matter the number of failures that preceded the attack.

2. The frequency of attempted attacks against the United States reveals a much more robust threat than is commonly understood. In the nearly twelve years since the first al-Qa`ida-sponsored attack on the U.S. homeland, there have been no less than thirteen major plots supported by al-Qa`ida or its affiliates—an average of more than one per year for twelve years. The list includes such plots as the Millennium Bomber in 2000, Najibullah Zazi's 2009 plan to attack New York City's subways and the Christmas Day bomber in 2009.[4] When the aperture expands beyond externally supported plots targeting the U.S. to include all domestic plots, the data reveal that there has been an attempted plot once every two months for twelve years within the United States. Despite the overwhelming number of failed attacks over the past twelve years, the high frequency of attacks over such an extended period of time speaks to both the resiliency and the appeal of al-Qa`ida's narrative to animate an increasingly diverse group of individuals within the United States.

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[4] The thirteen plots included in this statistic include: Millennium Bomber, 9/11 attacks, Richard Reid, 2004 Citibank Plot, 2006 airliner plot, Najibullah Zazi New York City plots, Christmas Day plots, Times Square Plot, Faris, Padilla, al-Marri and the Cargo Aircraft plots.

These two factors—the potential risk of large-scale attacks and the ability of a self-organizing movement to sustain its efforts with such frequency over so long a period of time—point to a stark reality: that while the United States and its allies have been very successful in constraining al-Qa`ida's ability to operate from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Yemen, the risk of homegrown terrorism is a more significant and persistent threat than many realize. This frustrating and troublesome state of affairs is the result of two main factors: (1) the salience of al-Qa`ida's narrativeideology to a diverse audience, even those living in the United States; and (2) the organization's ability to maintain appeal across generations and to remain a relevant voice across a decade of conflict and emerging world events.

This statement first explores the prevailing assumptions about the nature of the homegrown threat and the discord that results from a lack of a common understanding of the problem. Second, it considers the changing radicalization dynamic and challenges posed by this self-organizing system of violence. Third, the statement examines the nature of this persistent threat and its focus on targeting the U.S. military in a domestic context. This data is predicated upon a fourteen-month comprehensive research project conducted by the Combating Terrorism Center at West Point examining the homegrown jihadist threat within the United States.

HOMEGROWN TERRORISM CONTEXTUALIZED

The domestic al-Qa`ida threat is both a product of an international system of violence as well as a contributor to that system. While this is seemingly an obvious relationship, it is important to note that as much as homegrown terrorists are products of the broader al-Qa`ida movement, the broader movement itself derives significant benefit from incidents such as those at Fort Hood, the Christmas Day bomber or the attack on the Little Rock recruiting center. Attacks within the homeland, especially against military targets, provide significant propaganda value for al-Qa`ida. The now infamous *Inspire* magazine highlighted these attacks as models for others to emulate and as inspiration for others to act.

This symbiotic relationship between its domestic and international aspects is integral to al-Qa`ida's nature. The organization has always benefited, and at times suffered, from the activities of those inspired by its ideology or the plots of its affiliates. The very idea of al-Qa`ida is rooted in a transnational vision of global jihad defined by its ideology, and has been embodied in the core of the organization that operates from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Yet al-Qa`ida's fundamental constitution is built upon local, homegrown organizations. From al-Qa`ida's earliest members from the Islamic Jihad to al-Qa`ida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), the myriad of organizations in al-Qa`ida's "diaspora" are almost exclusively homegrown movements. This fact is easy to forget when groups such as AQAP assume a transnational mantle with attacks against the U.S. homeland or the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, AQAP was born from the conflict in Yemen and ultimately remains focused on its goals within Yemen; the same is true of al-Qa`ida in the Islamic Maghreb or Jemmah Islamiya in Indonesia.

Seen through this lens, the evolution of domestic actors inspired by al-Qa`ida does not seem as exceptional as it might otherwise appear. However, the qualifying difference between the U.S.

experience of homegrown terrorism and that of other countries' is the nature of the actors in the United States. In many ways, the U.S. manifestation of al-Qa`ida represents a devolution of the jihadist threat marked by the emergence of self-organizing, largely autonomous cells. These cells are rarely part of a larger organization, nor have they ever grown into a more robust organization such as AQAP. This is due as much to the inexperience of the cell members themselves as to the largely inhospitable environment in which they operate.
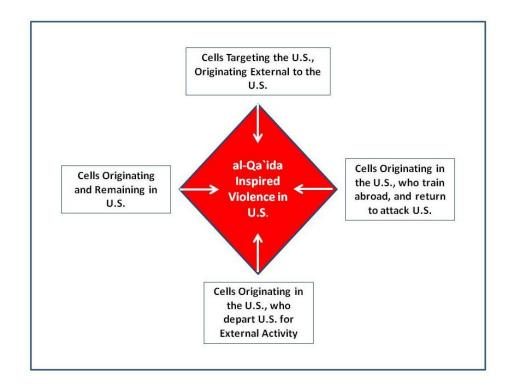
This experience is not entirely unique to the United States. Europe has witnessed far greater levels of jihadist activity than the United States has, yet important differences separate the two. First, al-Qa`ida and like-minded organizations have long-established support networks throughout Europe that have created a much more fertile environment for recruitment than in the United States. Prior to 9/11, Osama bin Laden and others were openly supported by select community and religious organizations, and in 2006, the then-head of Britain's MI-5 intelligence service noted that they were tracking 1,600 suspects in over 200 cells.[5] The sheer scale of jihadist activity, the diversity of groups and the largely permissible environment prior to 9/11 within the European context created vastly different conditions for the emergence of homegrown activities after 2001 than in the United States.[6]

The emergence of homegrown terrorism in the United States cannot be examined in a vacuum. As noted above, homegrown extremist activity in the United States is both a product of the external environment and a driver of such activity. It is the interplay of international and domestic plots that shapes the radicalization and mobilization of domestic audiences through four distinct but related dimensions of the al-Qa'ida inspired threat:

1. Threats targeting the U.S. that originate externally to the U.S.;
2. Individual al-Qa'ida-inspired violent extremists in the U.S., proceed overseas to receive training or material support and return to the U.S. to conduct attacks or support al-Qa'ida inspired activity;
3. Violent extremists who radicalize within the U.S. but travel and remain overseas to participate in the global jihad;
4. Individuals who radicalize and remain within the U.S.

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[5] Alan Cowell, "Blair Says Terrorist Threat to Last a Generation," New York Times, 10 November 2006.
6 This is not to suggest that the United States did not see its own "open" activities. Some estimates put the number of U.S. residents who participated in Afghanistan, Bosnia or Chechnya jihads ranging from 1,000 to 2,000. See Congressional Research Service report titled "American Jihadist Terrorism: Combating a Complex Threat," 7 December, 2010. Furthermore, Abdullah Azzam and Gulbuddin Hekmatyr , founder of the HiG in Afghanistan, made repeated recruiting trips through the U.S.—the latter doing so both during and after the end of the Afghan-Soviet war—to recruit U.S. residents.

Cells Targeting the U.S., Originating External to the U.S.

Cells Originating and Remaining in U.S.

al-Qa`ida Inspired Violence in U.S.

Cells Originating in the U.S., who train abroad, and return to attack U.S.

Cells Originating in the U.S., who depart U.S. for External Activity

The examination of threats originating externally to the United States may appear counterintuitive in studying domestic terrorism. However, the communicative aspects of terrorist violence are equally important, if not more important, than the physical results. Such exogenous terrorist attacks demonstrate that al-Qa`ida (the organization) remains relevant, that the U.S. remains an important target and that success is measured in terms beyond the actual destruction of a target. These plots both demonstrate to others that security measures are not impenetrable and inspire them to act.[7] While the mobilization of recruits in the U.S. is not the primary purpose of such attacks, it is an important by-product of this system of violence. Of the fifteen cells in this category since 1993, the four most or nearly successful post-9/11, attacks centered on aviation targets.[8] This category included the most complex plots as measured in the data set.[9] Each of these attacks that originated external to the United States involved explosives and none of the targets selected in the post-9/11 era were military targets.

The second dimension of the framework concerns individuals who radicalize to violence inside the United States and desire to participate in the global jihad. These individuals vary in terms of experience, background and connections with overseas jihadist networks, yet are consistent in their desire to gain an authentic experience and in their desire to fight against U.S. and coalition

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[7] Perhaps nowhere is this more clearly on display than in *Inspire Magazine*, where the authors celebrated the success of Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab in penetrating airline security to inspire others to act.

[8] For the purposes of this study, successful plots included those that alluded interdiction but where the device failed to detonate as in the example of the Christmas Day Bomber. This conclusion will be controversial to some, yet the fact that this sub-category of plots was successful in moving to execution phase without disruption by law enforcement is a success.

[9] Complexity was measured as a combination of factors including nature of the target (hard or soft), attack modality, target selection, group size, etc., to gauge the degree of complexity involved across the data set.

forces in Afghanistan. However, once they enter the foreign terrorist networks the individuals in this category are convinced that their true value rests in returning to the United States and conducting an attack in the homeland. In total, there have been twelve cells to date in this dimension, all occurring in the post-9/11 environment. Eight of the twelve were connected to al-Qa`ida's core organization and four were connected to al-Qa`ida's affiliated organizations. The greatest density of these plots occurred between 2008 and 2011.[10] Six of the twelve cells attacked a total of eight civilian targets, and only one cell targeted the U.S. military in the homeland–a successful attack against a Little Rock Armed Forces Recruiting Station. This strongly suggests that the networks training these individuals value civilian targets more than military targets and seek to inflict damage in a large-scale attack. Of the seven plots where the particular tactics were known, five planned to use explosives. The plots in this group range are among the most complex within the data set, reflecting an investment by al-Qa`ida in these cells with the intention to stage spectacular attacks inside the homeland.

The third category involves U.S. residents who travel overseas to participate in the global jihad and do not return to the United States. These cases range from the Somali youths from Minneapolis who joined al-Shabbab as foot soldiers to Adnan G. El Shukrijumah, an American from Florida, who has risen to become one of al-Qa`ida's external operations planners. These individuals provide significant value to al-Qa`ida. At the simplest level, U.S. residents who join the al-Qa'ida provide significant propaganda value for the movement and its claims against the United States and the West. While such individuals are limited in number, it is the others that are of greater concern—those individuals who, produce propaganda or serve in more senior operational roles. The "Americanization" of jihad that has occurred over the past four years has altered the threat environment and has direct implications for domestic radicalization. Much in the same way that prospective members of any group want to join an organization that is viable and relevant, individuals are far more likely to join an organization if they see people like themselves in that organization. American al-Qa`ida members provide this example, help tailor al-Qa`ida's narrative to appeal to domestic audiences and inspire others to join the jihad. These individuals do more to make the al-Qa'ida's narrative relevant to domestic audiences than any other factor within al-Qa`ida.

The final grouping concerns those individuals who radicalize and mobilize within the United States but do not travel abroad for training, receiving very little if any support from broader jihadist networks. Since 9/11 there have been forty-six plots in this category, involving eighty-five individuals. These individuals present the greatest challenge to the law enforcement and intelligence communities. In each plot, the members were autonomous adherents to al-Qa`ida's ideology. That is to say, they lacked any formal connections to extremist networks. Furthermore, thirty of the forty-six plots were perpetrated by lone-wolf actors. Perhaps not surprisingly, this category realizes the most success of any in successfully carrying out terrorist attacks (eight of forty-six). The reasons for this are simple: lone-wolf actors present a lower profile, making detection more difficult as they do not have to pass through customs or trigger terrorist watch lists, allowing them to hide in plain sight. In general they represent the least

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[10] There were four individuals total in this period: Vinas, Bledsoe, Zazi and Shahzad.

complex terrorist plots of the four categories; in addition, and six of the eight successful plots utilized firearms greatly simplifying the nature of attack.[11]

The degree of interplay between these categories is impossible to quantify, yet the fact that there is interaction between these four dimensions of the homegrown terrorist threat is undeniable. Locating the domestic threat within this system of violence, and addressing that it is both a product of the broader dynamics as well as a contributor to this system creates a unique opportunity to analyze new radicalization patterns, capture the dynamic of the threat through a different lens and examine in detail the disruption and interdiction of these plots.

Through all of this a perplexing question remains: Why, as the core of al-Qa`ida is increasingly constrained and discredited as a viable organization, is the domestic jihadist activity on the periphery of the movement becoming increasingly active in the United States? From a practical perspective, this state of affairs seems somewhat counterintuitive. To accept significant personal risk in joining a vibrant or successful terrorist movement presents a fairly high barrier to entry. However, accepting those risks for an organization that appears to be waning and whose viability is in question seems even more difficult to understand. Two explanations seem to offer insight to this paradox. First, the fact that 170 people have radicalized within the United States in the post-9/11 environment points to the relevance and appeal of al-Qa`ida's narrative even if to a select, narrow group. Second, the data are almost certainly a lagging indicator of the accumulation of a more sophisticated and targeted narrative, the perceptions of a protracted conflict and the evolution of an al-Qa`ida diaspora. The emergence of homegrown terrorism and the targeting of U.S. military forces requires a renewed examination of the nature of radicalization and the changing nature of autonomous radicalization—a process that today occurs largely in isolation from direct connection with external networks, creating new challenges for law enforcement and intelligence communities to detect, prevent and deter homegrown terrorism.

RADICALIZATION REDEFINED

The rapid rise of homegrown terrorism in the past three years has triggered discussion about the extent and nature of radicalization within the United States. While the numbers of homegrown terrorists are small, al-Qa`ida's ability to inspire and animate residents of the United States to join or act on behalf of al-Qa'ida is unquestioned. On its surface, the appeal of al-Qa`ida's narrative to U.S. residents is perplexing. Muslims living in the United States have a far higher degree of socio-economic attainment than in many other countries; do not face the same assimilation or integration dilemmas experienced in other locations, and while they have experienced some levels of discrimination after 9/11, have been largely accepted in this country.[12] This paradox is further complicated by an apparent shift in the nature of radicalization whereby peripheral actors are joining the movement with little contact to physical networks.

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[11] The other two plots utilized vehicles as weapons – also a very simply attack modality.
[12] The Muslim West Facts Project, Muslim Americans: A National Portrait. Washington, DC: Gallup, Inc., 2009, 13.

Despite large numbers of studies focusing on radicalization, it remains one of the most opaque issues within the terrorism studies field. The sheer diversity of backgrounds and motivations to join violent extremist movements complicates any attempt to draw detailed conclusions as to the reasons people accept such risks. Gerald Post, one of the most noted scholars of terrorism psychology, cautions that efforts to provide an overall "terrorist profile" are misleading, writing that "There are nearly as many variants of personality who become involved in terrorist pursuits as there are variants of personality."[13] For instance, within the domestic al-Qa`ida-inspired population there are individuals who are educated and uneducated; those who are immigrants, first generation, second generation and native-born participants; those who are employed and those who are unemployed and the list goes on. Even within cells there is wide variance between members. The Northern Virginia or "paintball" cell (an Lashkar-e-Taiba cell) is a prime example. The cell included three Arabs, three South Asians, one Korean, two African Americans, and two Caucasians. Of those, six were born into Muslim families whereas the other five were converts to Islam. Finally, six of the members were native-born, two were naturalized citizens, and the remaining three were permanent legal residents.

The reality of this situation presents significant challenges to the understanding of radicalization, its causes and the mobilization to violence, leaving most models to reflect only the most general qualities as markers of the radicalization process. Most descriptions include elements such as an affiliative need to belong to contribute to something larger than him or herself (or alternatively a desire for adventure); disaffection with his or her current situation; identification with both the victims of state oppression and the terrorist cause (both become personal and motivate action); a belief that violence is a moral response; and finally, that the individual has a duty to act.[14] The overwhelming generality of these characteristics makes it difficult to discern or identify the triggers that lead a person from sympathizing with a cause to activist behavior and finally to violent action.

Research suggests that radicalization is a fluid process, one in which participants may enter, exit or re-enter at different points in time and the commitment of an individual to a group typically occurs in stages. It is important to note that the factors driving radicalization – in other words - why someone joins a terrorist organization – are distinct from those affecting retention in a terrorist organization. Commitment to a movement does not last on its own accord and must be maintained in some manner such that the individual's participation in a terrorist organization remains satisfying.[15] Ultimately, the outcome of the radicalization process involves the subordination of previously held identities with the new identity as a member of an extremist organization. Issues that were once peripheral move to the center of an individual's world, replacing previously held value systems and world outlooks. For instance, an individual no longer sees himself as an American but rather sees his service to a greater cause.

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[13] Gerald Post, "Current Understanding of Terrorist Motivation and Psychology: Implications for a Differentiated Antiterrorist Policy," *Terrorism* 13, no. 1 (1990), 65–71.

[14] These factors are adapted from John Horgan's "From Profiles to Pathways and Roots to Routes," *Annals of Political and Social Science* (The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 2008) 618: 85.

[15] As one study of social movements noted: "Leadership, ideology, organization, rituals and social relations which make up a friendship network each contribute to sustaining commitment and the most effective is, of course, a combination of all five." Klandermas Bert, "Disengaging from Movements," in Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper (eds), *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2003), 16.

Successful mobilization to violence hinges upon an organization's ability to communicate an ideology that is relevant and meaningful to the target audience. The past decade of conflict and shifting world events have challenged al-Qa`ida's ability to keep its narrative relevant to the wide variety of its audiences—internal supporters, those it would like to attract to the movement and those the movement opposes—all while operating in an extremely contested environment. However, its relatively sophisticated media efforts, including "news" releases, direct messaging from movement leaders, the revisiting of historical events and the creation of interactive forums, have enabled the organization to target these various audiences in a fairly sophisticated manner.

Radicalization is best understood as occurring along a continuum of interaction between an organization and a recruit. At one end are cases in which a recruit is directly connected to the movement by ideological entrepreneurs with whom he has personal contact. At the other end are cases in which a recruit actively seeks or encounters information and ideas from an extremist movement but lacks direct personal contact. The difference between the members of the Hamburg Cell who formed the core of the 9/11 plot and Major Nidal Hasan's contact with an jihad ideologue is reflective of this continuum—presuming, for the purposes of this paper, that Hasan was motivated by the al-Qa'ida's ideology. In the former case, Mohammed Atta and three colleagues attended the Quds mosque in Hamburg, Germany, in which a radical cleric routinely discussed violent jihad.[16] In the Fort Hood case, that role was fulfilled by a U.S.-born Yemeni cleric whose sermons in English extolled the virtues of the al-Qa'ida narrative.[17] The only difference between the two radicalization types is that in a "self-radicalization" event, it is necessary for the individual to *initially* have a higher degree of commitment to the cause than an individual who is engaging in direct personal contact with the group or movement. In other words, direct contact with committed group members can make it possible for individuals who are less committed at the onset to become more firmly radicalized than he might become on his own.

This phenomenon of self-organizing, autonomous radicalization became extremely pronounced in the United States after 2001. Since 9/11, US law enforcement has severely constricted the environment in which radicalizing and mobilizing networks can operate. By doing so, they have essentially isolated the would-be-terrorist, forcing them to actively seek out materials online to expose themselves to these views. In other words, absent a peer network or other direct assistance, the individual must proactively engage the ideas to commit themselves to the radicalization pathway. Of the homegrown terrorists that radicalize and remain in United States, as opposed to those who radicalize and go abroad to fight, 56% (26 of 46 cells) of the cells radicalize in near-complete isolation from al-Qa'ida or its affiliated networks – either physical or virtual. When considering all of the homegrown cells in totality, 44% of these cells are largely disconnected from jihadist networks and move through the radicalization process in isolation. The explanation for the lower figure is simple. The second number includes domestically

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[16] The 9/11 Commission Report, New York: Norton, 2003, 164.
17 Hearing Before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate. 2009. 111th Cong, 1st sess.; Also see Michael Leiter, Director, National Counterterrorism Center, Remarks at Aspen Institute's "The Terror Threat Picture and Counterterrorism Strategy, 30 June 2010.

radicalized individuals who seek to fight abroad and, with few exceptions, it is necessary for these cells to make contact with a network to successfully engage in the broader global movement.

In an effort to continue to drive radicalization in the United States (and the West in general), al-Qa`ida and its affiliates have had to specifically tailor their message to reach the "self-radicalizing" audience. This is especially important as the vast majority of cells that have radicalized and remained in the United States since 9/11 are lone wolf plots (65%). *Inspire Magazine* is one of many examples of this type of media that has been produced over the last few years. Created by Samir Khan and Anwar Awlaki, two American citizens, *Inspire Magazine* served a unique function as each issue provided both ideological instruction and tactical know-how to the aspiring domestic jihadist.[18] Prior to the establishment of *Inspire Magazine*, most of al-Qa`ida's materials were ideological, motivational or tactical in nature. The combination of these dimensions in single product was an evolutionary step for al-Qa`ida's outreach and recruitment efforts functionally providing a one-stop reference to interested parties.

A recent plot that was fueled by *Inspire Magazine* was the 2011 Ft. Hood bomb plot. In an early issue of *Inspire Magazine*, Anwar al-Awlaki praised Nidal Hasan for the 2009 Fort Hood shooting that killed 13 and injured 32 military personnel. This previous attack and subsequent validation by Anwar al-Awlaki, fueled Army PFC Naser Jason Abdo to plot a similar attack near the same post. His plan was to detonate two improvised explosive devices inside a restaurant popular with military personnel and to shoot those fleeing the attack. This plot was developed by Abdo in almost complete isolation. When the FBI interdicted the plot they discovered bomb making materials and a copy of *Inspire Magazine* containing an article entitled, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of Your Mom." He was reported to have been using the exact recipe found in the magazine to construct his improvised explosive devices.[19]

THE MILITARY AS TARGETS

As the decade of conflict has evolved, the predominant target of choice for homegrown terrorists in the United States has become the U.S. military. Nearly 50 percent of all plots in the homeland since 9/11(41 of 87 plots) considered targeting U.S. military personnel. In one sense, the military focus is perhaps an obvious choice by those aspiring to participate in the global jihad. To an al-Qa`ida adherent, the U.S. military represents the manifestation of American foreign policy more so than any other target choice as the military—in al-Qa`ida's narrative—is responsible for the oppression and humiliation of Muslims in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Yemen, among other locations.

The targeting of U.S. military forces within the homeland presents a unique and perhaps qualitatively different target set than transportation infrastructure, religious or other civilian entities. The perception that the military is to blame for the plight of Muslims abroad is overwhelmingly privileged in al-Qa`ida's propaganda from *Inspire* magazine to recruiting videos

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[18] These individuals prominently figure in the creation of the publication and are listed in the publication numerous times.

[19] United States of America v. Naser Jason Abdo, Criminal Complaint. Western District, TX, 2011, 1-2.

featuring improvised explosive devices killing U.S. soldiers. This portrayal of U.S. military forces as war criminals and the accompanying call for reprisals create a compelling narrative for those seeking to define their participation in the fight.

However, there is a more subtle dimension to the selection and justification of the military as a preferred target, but one that is equally important to consider. For many homegrown terrorists, attacking the military may well represent a choice that is "easier" to overcome in terms of the moral barriers of targeting symbols of U.S. foreign policy rather than the shopping mall, restaurants or public spaces in which he or she may have frequented with his or her friends. The social distance between a terrorist's individual experiences and the military is in most cases far greater than that of other potential targets, making it easier to objectify military targets. Abdul-Latif, the perpetrator of the planned attack against the Seattle Military Entrance Processing Station captured this sentiment best: "The key thing to remember here is, is we are not targeting anybody innocent—that means old people, women out of uniform, any children. Anything. Just people who wear the green for the kaffir Army, that's who we're going after."[20]

Finally, while any al-Qa`ida inspired attack within the United States is a high-profile event for both the violent extremists and the citizens of this nation, successful attacks against the military in the homeland represent a particularly unique event. Government agencies including military garrisons, recruiting stations and law enforcement offices, have long been considered primary and important targets by terrorist groups around the world. Not only does the targeting of these agencies seek to interfere with the execution of governmental affairs, but as instruments of national power, these targets serve an expressive purpose as well as an instrumental one. The symbolic value of targeting military or law enforcement is significant. Such attacks demonstrate a degree of power by the terrorist, seek to draw attention to structural violence by the state serving an agenda setting function and, finally, hope to deter others from supporting the government.

All of these factors are at play with al-Qa`ida inspired violence in the homeland targeting military facilities, yet there is still another dimension. Violence against service members in their barracks, offices or with their families shocks the national conscience in ways that combat deaths do not. This is not to say that combat losses mean less than a soldier killed during a homegrown terrorist attack, but rather that the effect of these events in the press and national psyche differ: soldiers are supposed to be safe when at home, they are not supposed to die from a terrorist's bomb or rifle.[21]

In examining the threat to military forces in the homeland, it is important to note that most analyses under-represent the scope and dimensions of the threat by homegrown, al-Qa`ida inspired terrorists. A cursory look at the data would indicate that there have "only" been eighteen attacks that directly target U.S. military forces within the United States; fourteen of those have

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[20]   Complaint at page 31, US v. Abdul-Latif, et ano., No. MJ11-292 (W.D. Wash., 2011).

[21] For example, in a Google News search that ranges ninety days from two incidents, the November 2009 Fort Hood shooting and the August 2011 Chinook crash that killed U.S. Navy SEALs in Afghanistan shortly after the raid that killed Osama bin Laden, the number of articles referencing the Fort Hood shooting outnumbered the Chinook crash by a factor of 7:1.

occurred since 2007. This is a significant number to be sure, however, these numbers do not reflect the totality of interest in targeting U.S. military forces amongst the domestic jihadi population. A broader look at the issue reveals two other groups requiring examination. The first focuses on those homegrown extremists that sought to fight U.S. forces abroad. Ten cells actually accomplished this and thirteen others intended to do so. This group is of primary concern. When these cells leave the United States with the purpose of engaging in classical jihad against American military forces they enter the "black box" of jihad in which they can be directed towards a myriad of different targets. Some of the largest threats America has faced in recent years from homegrown extremists have occurred when individuals' interest was redirected after arriving overseas or planned on returning to the United States to conduct an attack. Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, arrived in Pakistan intent on joining the Pakistani *Tehrik-i-Taliban* (TTP) in the hopes of fighting American military forces in Afghanistan. The TTP leadership quickly recognized that his value was far greater if he were trained and redirected to carry out a terrorist in the United States. Although, Shahzad's limited training prevented him from designing a successful car bomb, his ability to avoid detection and to place the bomb in Times Square on a busy Saturday evening was a blow to Americans' perception of security.

The second group to evaluate is those individuals within the United States that considered attacking military forces in the homeland but, for whatever reason, changed course as they moved forward. This group includes an additional eight plots. Military targets were the first step in their vision of participating in the global jihad with the homeland given the strong symbolism of U.S. military targets. While these cells ultimately did not select a military target, the numbers reflect a strong interest in doing so. Together, this expanded look at the data reveals 49 cells over the past decade planned to, or desired to, attack U.S. military forces. This represents more than half (56%) of the total number of cells (87) in the data set. The more pressure al-Qa`ida's core is subjected to, the more difficult it will be for people in the U.S. to connect with foreign networks overseas. While it is impossible to know for certain if these cells would have selected military targets had they been unable to travel to Pakistan, the primacy of the U.S. military as a target for al-Qa`ida's adherents is likely to remain steady for some time to come.

Any examination of al-Qa`ida's targeting of homeland military forces must include a discussion of what has colloquially become known as the insider threat.[22] The effect of these actors on the military is perhaps more divisive and damaging than attacks against military targets staged by external actors. At the tactical level, insiders also have the potential to do more harm than external threats given their knowledge of installations, schedules and ability to gain access to areas that would be restricted to civilians. At the organizational level, insider threats tear at the social fabric of an organization and make people question the patriotism of those serving next to them. At the strategic level, these attacks provide al-Qa`ida with immense propaganda value and, in one sense, these actors are the ultimate prize for al-Qa`ida. The rejection of the values

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[22] For the purposes of this study, the insider threat includes active duty service members, government civilian employees, military contractors, Reservists or National Guard members and former military members. This expansive definition permits the inclusion of the threats that have unique knowledge about military installations, patterns of behavior, access requirements and can use that knowledge to gain advantages external actors would not otherwise possess.

that their uniforms stood for and an abandonment of the oaths they swore validate al-Qa`ida's narrative in a way that no other domestic, homegrown radicalized individual could hope to achieve. Simply put, the potential effects of the insider threat are grossly disproportionate to the extremely small number of these cells. The characteristics of the insiders reveal four interesting trends.

1. The radicalization process for all individuals took place in near isolation and was passive in nature. The contact with outside extremists was exceptionally sparse and often over email. For example, Abujihaad maintained limited correspondence with two subjects and through these individuals, disseminated sensitive data but he lacked direct ties with these subjects. Abdo, Akbar and Anderson also appeared to lack any meaningful, direct communication with extremist networks.

2. Related to the first dynamic, the individuals that engaged in physical attacks were exclusively lone wolf actors. Whether the decision to act alone resulted from lack of access to extremist networks or resulted from a strategic choice (or social disposition) is not known – but the lack of contact with external networks significantly limit the opportunity for detection and interdiction.

3. The strong degree of isolation of the actors is strongly correlated to a low level of plot complexity. Again, it is largely impossible to discern the actors' intent or attack preference but given the attack profiles, it is clear they favored the readily available rather than intricate mass-casualty tactics. Despite the desire of two individuals to use explosives, firearms were the preferred tactic of four of the six in this group.

4. In the two mass casualty attacks, target selection evidenced the value of knowledge and access of an insider. Insider threats are not dangerous solely because of their access – which is crucial—but it is the combination of access with knowledge of the organization, time schedules and vulnerable points that enable plots to become significantly more dangerous than they otherwise might be.

By design or happenstance, these attackers produced significant "psychological anxiety" (in the words of Abujihaad) within the U.S. military. It is all too easy to forget that, at its fundamental level, terrorism is about the psychology of fear. Targeting of the military, either from the inside or external to the Armed Forces, presents uniquely different outcomes than exist in other quarters. This is not to say these attacks mean more or have a greater impact than similar deaths among civilian communities but rather to suggest that the prevalence of interest among homegrown extremists to target the military is a persistent issue that must be taken seriously.

CONCLUSION

While domestic violent extremists have only realized limited success in the United States, the initial data presented here paint a picture of a greater threat than many realize. However, the potential physical violence from these aspiring cells is only one dimension of the threat. The radicalization and mobilization to violence of U.S. citizens' tears at the fabric of society in a way

that attacks originating from Yemen or Pakistan do not. Xenophobic responses to these incidents foster mistrust of Muslim diaspora communities and risk creating the very conditions that work against counterterrorism efforts in which communities turn inward and cooperation with law enforcement officials is reduced. Effective intelligence and law enforcement efforts to detect and disrupt homegrown cells are critically necessary but are not sufficient to fully addressing the problem of homegrown extremism. Law enforcement efforts must be coupled with programs to counter violent extremism to ultimately foster inhospitable conditions for the emergence of al-Qa`ida inspired extremists within the United States.