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UNDERSTANDING CYBERSPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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CONTENTS

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF HEARINGS

2009

Page

HEARING:

Wednesday, December 16, 2009, Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization 1

APPENDIX:

Wednesday, December 16, 2009 27

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2009

UNDERSTANDING CYBERSPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

STATEMENTS PRESENTED BY MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Miller, Hon. Jeff, a Representative from Florida, Ranking Member, Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee 2

Smith, Hon. Adam, a Representative from Washington, Chairman, Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee 1

WITNESSES

Boucek, Dr. Christopher, Associate, Middle East Program, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 5

Brachman, Dr. Jarret, Author, "Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice" 2

APPENDIX

PREPARED STATEMENTS:

Boucek, Dr. Christopher 46

Brachman, Dr. Jarret 35

Miller, Hon. Jeff 33

Smith, Hon. Adam 31

DOCUMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD:

[There were no Documents submitted.]

WITNESS RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS ASKED DURING THE HEARING:

[There were no Questions submitted during the hearing.]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING:

Mr. Smith 57

UNDERSTANDING CYBERSPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS
AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE,
Washington, DC, Wednesday, December 16, 2009.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 2:17 p.m., in room HVC–210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. Adam Smith (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. ADAM SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM WASHINGTON, CHAIRMAN, TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. SMITH. We appreciate both Dr. Brachman and Dr. Boucek being with us today. And I think it is a very important topic. Several of us on the committee have been briefed a couple times about what is going on in cyberspace with regard to al Qa'ida, their message, and the efforts to radicalize the Muslim population.

And it is a very, very extensive part of the battlefield that I think too few people on our side are aware of. Al Qa'ida and other likeminded violent extremist groups are on the Internet, aggressively recruiting and trying to radicalize people, and also spreading their message, spreading their violent, hateful message, basically focused on the West wanting to attack Islam and doing a number of things to spread that message falsely.

And it is my belief that they have occupied that message space without a sufficient counter from us. The analogy that occurred to me is it is like being in a really, really close political campaign and only your opponent is on television. Anybody who has ever run for office knows how deadly that can be. Well, this is that problem spread all the way around the world.

Al Qa'ida and likeminded groups are out there, spreading their message, being fairly effective at spreading it, and we are not there. We are letting them occupy a very critical space in the message battle, in the battle for ideas.

What we want to hear about today is a little bit more about how they do that, but also, more importantly, what we are doing and what more we can be doing to counter it and become much more effective at doing counter-radicalization, spreading our message and undermining al Qa'ida's message on the Internet.

And with that, I do have a full statement that I will submit for the record, but I will leave it at that, and I will turn it over to our ranking member, Mr. Miller, for any opening comments he might have.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Smith can be found in the Appendix on page 31.]

STATEMENT OF HON. JEFF MILLER, A REPRESENTATIVE FROM FLORIDA, RANKING MEMBER, TERRORISM, UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES SUBCOMMITTEE

Mr. MILLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I associate myself with your remarks. I also have a statement to enter into the record. In view of time, I would like to go ahead and let's start this hearing.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Miller can be found in the Appendix on page 33.]

Mr. SMITH. Terrific. Thank you very much.

We have Dr. Jarret Brachman, who is the author of "Global Jihadism: Theory and Practice," with us. He has testified before this committee previously as an expert, I guess, on radical Islam, did some work up at West Point previously on that issue, and look forward to hearing his thoughts on this very important subject.

Dr. Brachman.

STATEMENT OF DR. JARRET BRACHMAN, AUTHOR, "GLOBAL JIHADISM: THEORY AND PRACTICE"

Dr. BRACHMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Miller, distinguished members of the subcommittee. It is an honor and privilege to be here today.

I would like to keep my thoughts very informal and just kind of chat about what I have been up to, I guess, vis-a-vis the jihadi use of the Internet. Two weeks ago, a guy who I don't know where he lived put a video, about a three-minute video, showing a scene from "Lord of the Rings." Right, this is something that is very popular with Americans. I think he is an American, but I don't know.

And the video showed—he subtitled. It was "The Fellowship of the Ring," these guys, the good guys that he said were them and the bad guys he said was me. And the way this ended was the bad guy got his head chopped off. And he said, "This is what happens to guys like Dr. Jarret Brachman."

So, you know, am I scared about this? No, because this guy is typical of something that I have been calling jihobbiests, right, this is the group of enthusiasts who use the Internet to outlet their anger and their frustration, to build social networks and gain some sort of identity and some sort of, you know, social meaning, who most of them will never go out and do anything operational, but it is the one or two out of these thousands, you know, or hundreds, that do.

And so it is identifying, how do you know which one is going to become the next, you know, alleged Nidal Hasan or somebody who takes this to the next level, or get grabbed by somebody on YouTube and say, "Hey, why don't you come over to Pakistan, come through the camps? We will get you, you know, fighting." And so this is something I have been struggling a lot with.

Another quick anecdote, there is a—probably the most sophisticated pro-al Qa'ida journal in English has been released now. I think they are in their fourth iteration. It is called "Jihad Recollections." It is produced openly by a guy who lives with his parents in Charlotte, North Carolina, and this is one of the most sophisti-

cated journals, I say, because it shows the least amount of dissonance from the kinds of journals we are seeing in Arabic, right?

So what has happened over the past few years is that the al Qa'ida support group, Americans and English-speakers, have caught up. They used to be way behind in terms of their ideological sophistication; now I think they are almost synonymous.

And so this journal came out, and one of the authors was—used the pen name Abu Abdullah as-Sayf, you know, a guy—again, we don't know who he is. He commented about all this ideological stuff. And on my Web site, I attacked him pretty vigorously on ideological fronts.

And I also mentioned, you know, as an aside, that he sounds like the kind of guy who lives in his mommy's basement. Right, now this—I was just doing just to be funny. He sent me a letter back on—by way of my Web site, and—and out of all the attacks that I gave him on ideological, theological, religious, historical fronts, the only thing he keyed in on was the fact that I had attacked him for living in his parents' basement. He said, "I am economically self-sufficient. I demand you publish a retraction on your Web site."

And so that was curious to me. After a doing a little bit more research, I found that this guy was using a T-shirt company online where you can post your own—you can make your own T-shirts and then sell them, and he was creating pro-al Qa'ida T-shirts, right? So he had about 30 that he had made.

So this guy spends his time writing articles for pro-al Qa'ida, you know, journals in English and making pro-al Qa'ida T-shirts in English. And so to be funny, you know, I made a T-shirt that said, "Abu Abdullah as-Sayf Does Not Live in his Mommy's Basement," and I posted that.

But I tell you all this because what I have been trying to do is poke these guys with sticks ideologically and through, you know, the media, because that is what knocks them on the defensive. We found this in 2007. Ayman al-Zawahiri came after some of the work that I had done, specifically—and at one time attacked us, saying, "Well, this just proves the point."

Second, he said, "Well, in fact, this Brachman guy is doing something that even my worst enemies aren't doing. He is using my own words against me without embellishing them and then he is publishing it broadly on the Internet, and this hurts." And then the third time, he did kind of a Dave Letterman jokefest about how many mistakes I had made in a one-half-page biography of him, right?

So the fact that these guys are—they have a sense of humor, first of all, which helps them for their strategic communication. When you are funny, it gets people's attention much more than if you are publishing 1,600-page serious, you know, tomes, which they also do, but they are reading everything that we write incessantly and using it against us. They call this methodology the power of truth.

And they say that the power of truth isn't their truth; it is our truth. And the more that they can just simply turn the mirror back on us, the more resonance they get.

And so what we have seen, I think, over the past few years is—well, I think the biggest trend is that al Qa'ida has transformed

from—I argue, from a terrorist organization that uses the media into a media organization that uses terrorism, at least in the way they think about themselves. And they do this because it makes strategic sense. When you are—when you are embattled, when you are, you know, decentralized, you can use the media as a force multiplier, right?

So if you can't go out and do operations, it takes the onus off you. You can continue to propel other people towards this. And so it is this curious interplay between people self-radicalizing online, reaching back to, you know, the proverbial mother ship in Afghanistan, Pakistan, finding some operational, you know, coordination and support, going back to these camps, and then being redeployed.

That is something we haven't quite cracked that code yet. But the fact is, these guys are very aggressive online. The English-speaking supporters of al Qa'ida now know and understand al Qa'ida just as well as the Arabic-speakers do. And you can basically—I mean, it is a buffet out there. You could get anything you want. If you are into these serious ideological texts, you can not only read them, but you can start writing them thanks to these journals.

If you want to just watch, you know, people get their heads cut off and watch things blow up, there are tens of thousands of videos now online you can gain them at.

One thing—one trend I have been noticing lately is that—I have spent a lot of time on these al Qa'ida forums, right, where people post, and they—it creates kind of a second world for them, where these guys live in these forums, they upload news stories trying to prove how bad we are and how good they are.

But what I found is that, in places like YouTube, these social networking sites that I kind of used to pooh-pooh, suggesting, oh, they—they download these videos, but they have created an internal subculture within places like YouTube. And the more I spend time looking at this, I mean, this is—it is a separate world. The guys who are on YouTube I don't think are the same guys who are on these forums.

So what has happened is, more people have more avenues to participate in more ways, on more levels of intellectual sophistication than ever before. So I think, over the past few years, we have actually—we have done less thinking and done less support for understanding our enemy, and they have done more. They have, you know, spread—they spread out the foundation.

And so the problem—you know, I will stop here. I think the problem is, we think we have got it, and so now we have got to go kill and capture these guys. The problem is, for them, it is not something to get. It is the process. We are results-driven. We are ends-driven. We are timelines, benchmarks, empirical evidence. For them, it is—it will happen inshallah. You know, it is destined, so let's just all get out there and do.

And so I think we need to take a different perspective and have a different logic. And that is where the power of academia and intellectuals and researchers, who may be doing work that doesn't seem directly applicable and may not immediately demonstrate success, you know, and advancement in the war, that is where I think it will help win the long-term strategic fight.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Brachman can be found in the Appendix on page 35.]

Mr. SMITH. If I may, before turning to Dr. Boucek, following up on that point, I think that is the critical piece of what this committee has tried to focus on. And certainly there is an operational aspect of our war against al Qa'ida, identifying who they are, actively disrupting their networks in a variety of different ways, but I think the broader battle that is more troubling right now than the operational war, is the battle for ideas, is the long-term message, and that really we are fighting an ideology, and they, too, they are espousing an ideology, but also fighting our ideology.

And when we are looking, you know, out there, trying to stop people from becoming radicalized and put an end to this ideology, it is a message war, and it is—you know, it is media, it is whatever messages can be derived. And right now, we are, I think, considerably behind in fighting that battle and getting engaged in that long-term ideological message. And it differs from an election in a number of ways, but one of the biggest ways is there is no set date, as you said. This is an ongoing struggle. It is sort of more like, you know, I hate to say Pepsi versus Coke, but it is really—you know, it is a long, long-term branding issue for, you know, one brand to try and triumph over another. I think we need to start thinking more strategically about that.

And I will ask a couple questions, let you comment on that after we get Dr. Boucek's testimony. He is an associate from the Middle East program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

Dr. Boucek, please go ahead.

STATEMENT OF DR. CHRISTOPHER BOUCEK, ASSOCIATE, MIDDLE EAST PROGRAM, CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL PEACE

Dr. BOUCEK. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Miller, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be here today to speak about this very important topic. I think I would like to keep my remarks very informal and conversational.

I would like to begin just by sort of putting, I think, the Internet in perspective. And I think it is important to keep in mind that the Internet is not a series of virtual training camps. I think it is probably best to think of the Internet as a system to propagate and perpetuate ideology and a means to link individuals and organizations or movements that may be very disparate, spread across large geographic distances, or even tangentially associated.

And I think Jarret makes this great point that it spreads participation, and I think this is something that we need to key in on.

Just as, you know, there are varied pathways by which people get into radicalization, I think there are also varied pathways by which people get out of radicalization. And it is becoming more and more, I think, accepted and there is more and more research showing that people do leave violent militant groups or terrorist organizations, and I think we need to understand this much better.

It might be helpful, I think, to think about this as a scale of how people participate in radicalization, how people engage in violence,

and also think about how people disengage from violence, and there is a scale.

I think there is this common perception that people get interested in something, and then they get radicalized, and then they get recruited by an organization. And from my research and my experiences doing research in the Middle East, I think we can say it is a little bit backwards from that. People get interested in something, then are recruited by an organization who then radicalizes them.

Or you may have no interest in religion. You may be a non-practicing Muslim who gets recruited by an organization who is then radicalized. And I think this most recent example of the five youths from Virginia that are in Pakistan can go as to illustrate this somewhat.

I think I would like to turn now to talk about what the Saudis do, in terms of Internet counter-radicalization, because I think this can be a very interesting case study. The Saudis claim that there are about 17,000 sites, 17,000 Web sites that propagate Islamist extremism or terrorist ideology. And we definitely see that there is a linkage between the Internet and the advent of the Internet in Saudi Arabia and the rise in violence, the most recent al Qa'ida campaign in 2003.

And the Internet has become a repository for much of this information. Whereas this used to be available in hard copy, now it is available online. This has now shifted, as the authorities have cracked down on the Internet. People might meet online, but then they will meet face to face to hand off information. Most hard-core jihadis in Saudi Arabia are not recruited online. Most activity does not take place online.

And to address this kind of disparity between people who are interested in going online looking for things, the Saudis have come up with this program called the Sakinah campaign. Sakinah means tranquility, the peacefulness you receive through association with God. This is a nongovernmental association that is supported by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, and the Ministry of Education.

And basically, this is composed of two aspects. One aspect of the campaign is scholars who go online to collect information, so they collect the books, the pamphlets, the videos to better understand the thinking and the ideology at work with extremists. Part of this is also infiltrating extremist Web sites to sow dissent and to work from the inside.

The other half of the campaign is made up of religious scholars who go online to interact with people in chatrooms, so they identify problematic chatrooms. Scholars will go online to look for people that they can try to engage in dialogue. And similar to how other rehabilitation programs in Saudi Arabia work, religious scholars will then try to draw you out into explaining why you believe your religion justifies violence or why your beliefs are founded on an understanding of Islam.

In presenting evidence to the contrary, they try to show people there is a different way than what they might be thinking. So this is basically saying, if you go online to look for questions, answers

about religion and you listen to these guys who go off on the wrong track, if you listen to people who know, they will go off on this way.

One of the really fascinating things about the Sakinah campaign is that they will then take the back-and-forth dialogue and publish it online so others can read this. So this might take place in a direct back and forth or kind of a series of posts, but there is a multiplying effect when they put this on their Web site for other people to read.

Also on their Web site are different documents and studies, recantation videos, things like that that explain extremism and radicalization.

The Saudis have done a number of other things that we can get into about criminalization or trying to control the issuance of problematic religious rulings, fatwas. But one of the fascinating things, I think, about this program is it has this international appeal. And there are people who interact with the Sakinah workers from throughout the Middle East, from throughout the West and the United States.

A number of countries have expressed interest in this program, the Americans, the British, the Algerians, the Emirates, the Kuwaitis. I was in Saudi Arabia in October, and I was told that the Algerians and the Saudis had just concluded a memorandum to help them develop a similar-type program.

There are other programs—you know, while not Internet-based—that are radio-based throughout the Middle East. Tunisia has a program of radio stations that address kind of more moderate or less extreme versions of Islam. And I would be happy to answer more questions about this, and when we get into the back and forth.

I think, you know, when we are kind of looking forward about ways to move forward, I think it is important to encourage local partners. And I think, you know, the United States has a lot of capabilities to help local partners come up with similar-type programs. Part of this is empowering local voices, and there are local voices in the region, you know, who will speak out against political violence.

Now, for the American government, I am sure there are caveats with that in that these might not be the most moderate voices, the most moderate voices that you would want to promote on other issues. But I think, you know, looking forward, it is going to be important not only to follow some of the suggestions or recommendations that Dr. Brachman made, but I think it is important from a counter-messaging point—and I kind of am hesitant to use that word—but I think an important thing is to highlight the flaws in these arguments, and I think especially, when we are talking about an organization that is based on—a movement that is based on ideologies and grievances, it is important to engage on those issues.

And I think this is a moral movement or what is viewed as a moral movement. And highlighting those moral flaws or those moral issues I think can be very powerful, and I think this is probably a good way to go forward.

With that, I would like to say thank you again, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Boucek can be found in the Appendix on page 46.]

Mr. SMITH. Thank you both very much. We will adhere to the five-minute rule. Only a few members here. Hopefully, we will get around more than one round, but in order to keep it structured, we will do that, five minutes, and that includes me.

Two series of questions. I will start with one and see if I can get to the other one. And the first area is, you know, what are we doing organizationally to counter this message on the Internet? What is sort of the counter-message out there? And I understand this can come from a lot of different areas. You mentioned Saudi Arabia is, you know, actively involved in it, so it doesn't just have to be the United States government, you know, DOD [Department of Defense], State Department, whatever. There could be different sites. You, for instance, some of your Web sites.

But how well are we doing? How involved are we? You know, focusing first on what the U.S. government is doing in, you know, actively looking at this stuff online, forgetting for the moment the quality of what we are doing. Are we engaged in trying to counter, in trying to get our own message out? I mean, one of the obvious approaches would be sort of to do what you have said the jihadists have done, which is take their words and use them against them, do the, you know, truth mirror ourselves.

But how active are we? And what should we be doing that we are not, in terms of more readily following the Internet, getting our message out there, countering the message that is so harmful to us?

Dr. Brachman, you can go first, if you want.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Thank you, sir. It is a complicated question. You know, anecdotally, I think that anything that the United States government has said or done, al Qa'ida will find a way to spin it against us. Where al Qa'ida seems to react most defensively and reactionary is actually against academics and research reports about them.

You know, if you use—and we can get to the recent revisions by Ayman al-Zawahiri's recent mentor, he published, you know, a scholarly text where he went after Zawahiri pretty aggressively. And this—you know, I call it my barking dogs metric, right? How many of their side—their dogs are barking about something?

In this case, Zawahiri not only mentioned it in two videos, but wrote a book to counter it. Abu Yahya al-Libi, the most important thinker, I think, within al Qa'ida published his own book, mentioned it in two separate videos. Abu Basir al-Tartusi, all these other guys mentioned this, right?

So however much they come out against something to me is an indicator of how vulnerable they feel about something and where they have—where they are most reactionary, again, is when we engage them on the ideas and the basis of their ideology.

In terms of the programs, you know, one would assume that the United States government is doing everything from the overt to the classified level. I am familiar with some of those programs, but I have no ability to assess their impact. You know, the State Department did have one program where they tried to push America and

how happy Muslims in the West were, and I think that was universally seen as an abject failure.

So the thing about jihadis—and, more importantly, the fence-sitters, people who are—you know, they are always looking for conspiracy, and they are always looking for a way to indict something at the outset, to reject the premise, and so that is why research and academic scholarship, I think, comes off, because it is objective, and they say—they can engage it.

There is a crazy admiration that they have or at least a sense of respect from one scholar to another. And I think, ironically, that is where we could make the most impact, and that is where we are funding the least, and that was the biggest lesson we learned during the Cold War, was that this is an intellectual fight. We have to fund the heck out of universities. Sovietology departments, you know, were established all over the country.

And maybe they were studying, you know, czarist poetry from the, you know, 14th century, and it may not have seemed—but what it did was it created a new generation of grad students who became professionals who then could contribute to the——

Mr. SMITH. So rather than having the State Department have, you know, one of its departments focusing on the Web, you know, we would be better served to fund various different think-tanks, different universities that study radical Islamic thought?

Dr. BRACHMAN. And publish on it.

Mr. SMITH. And publish on it——

Dr. BRACHMAN. Because we know that they are reading and they are reacting to it. They are forced to react to it. And when they are reacting to it, they are not innovating on the offensive, and that is an important point.

I will turn it over to Chris.

Mr. SMITH. Please.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think this is an excellent question. I think it is important to be engaged. On an argument based on ideas, it is important to be engaged on these issues of ideas, and I think it is—I am incredibly surprised that eight years after, you know, this conflict has begun, there is no centralized, systematized program or organizations to understand these ideas and to publish on this.

And I think—and Jarret makes these great points that, you know, the—I think there is more willingness from the government or from the military to listen to academics or outsiders, but I think they engage—this is almost a one-way street, I think, where they are asking questions we need.

And I think, instead, it would be helpful if there was a system to promote this scholarship that would help people better understand the context from which all of this comes, because I think that we are going to come up with the answers and the questions you don't know yet which to ask.

I think the other thing—and I will say this really quickly—is that, you know, there is a spectrum of people on how they get engaged, and we are not looking for the 100 percent hard-core. We are looking at the people who are—have yet to make up their minds.

Mr. SMITH. Great. Thank you very much.

Mr. Miller.

Mr. MILLER. It is interesting you would say that the—about the State Department's activities in regards to putting things on the Internet, trying to talk about how good America is, and the State Department also flies imams to other countries to try to explain to them how great it is to be a Muslim in America, which I think also is probably an abject failure, as well, just a total waste of money.

If you could rate on a scale of 1 to 10 in regards to cyberspace or the Internet, you know, where does it rank in, you know, radicalization? You know, is it an effective place for them to go to become radicalized? I mean, I know that is a pretty wide-open question, but what would you think?

Dr. BRACHMAN. So I will take the first part of the question first. In terms—the State Department did have one program that I thought was very innovative and I thought it wasn't funded well enough, which was a—it was a micro-level engagement, where we had State Department analysts, I think in Arabic, publishing as U.S. State Department onto some of these forums, taking on, you know, people one to one, saying, "Well, actually, that is not what the United States government said, actually." And I think that is a much more effective, because it is seen as candid and honest. There is an authenticity issue here that seems to screw up a lot of our propaganda or, you know, our messaging, you know, propaganda from their side, messaging from our side.

But in terms of the—to rate it, I would say that the Internet is not a sufficient—a solely sufficient place to radicalize somebody, but it is certainly a contributing factor, an exacerbating factor. So—and it is context-dependent. For some people, it would be a 10, that they absolutely needed the Internet to take that next step. But for other people, it just kind of reinforces that which they already know, and so it is case to case.

Mr. MILLER. Is it more of a meet-up place, more just of a place to make contact and then go from there?

Dr. BRACHMAN. For some cases. I mean, in my testimony, you know, what I found was that in some of these Americans who got radicalized, they were able to network and maintain communications thanks to the Internet. In other ways, I mean, the Internet was peripheral to—it was that they were going out and shooting, you know, doing paintball or lifting weights together, and it was the human touch that was necessary. So I think it is critical, but at the same time, it is not solely sufficient.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think that is a really important point. I think the Internet does not replace that personal, social interaction that we see of how people bond together, how movements and organizations come together. I think the Internet plays a key part, though, in propagating this ideology.

And as a consumer of this all the time, I think that is what you can become absorbed in. You know, programs to address the fallacies or the mistakes or the errors of understanding are important. I think those need to be funded.

A lot of the stuff, you know, for obvious reasons, though, can't come from the American government. I mean, I think anything that comes from the American government is going to be doubted and, you know, questioned and argued against, and I think this needs to come probably other ways.

And I think, you know, probably sending imams from the United States abroad maybe isn't the best use of taxpayer money, but I would think figuring out ways to take people in the region who have spoken out—and there are a number of ideologues and thinkers who have spoken out against violence, and figuring out ways to amplify their messages.

You know, there is this material out there, these credible voices or alternative voices. We don't need to reinvent that wheel. We can figure out ways to propagate that and to promote it other ways.

Mr. SMITH. Thanks.

Mr. Marshall.

Mr. MARSHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you both for your testimony. This is very interesting and informative. Any measures of success for the Saudi program that you have described?

Dr. BOUCEK. I think getting any kind of metrics in Saudi Arabia can be extremely difficult. I mean, there are a number of reports and studies that have come out, you know, that would say—for instance, one came out and said 700, another came out and said 1,200 people have recanted their beliefs.

I think it is difficult to get an accurate message. And I think, you know, there has been an awful lot of attention paid on other forms of rehabilitation in Saudi Arabia. This is a program that has not gotten enough attention, and I think there aren't people doing research on this, and it is something we should look into.

Mr. MARSHALL. So you are enthusiastic about this as a possible model, but at this point, you can't really say how effective it——

Dr. BOUCEK. Well, I mean, I think it is—first of all, I think it is early days yet, right, number one. I think, number two, any efforts to combat extremist ideology online should support it and encourage it, I would think, especially—we know, you know, what has come out of Saudi Arabia in the past.

So to think that, you have got government organizations and religious scholars coming together to say, "This is not how we want our religion to be represented," I think the Saudis understand, first and foremost, they are a target of all this, and I think, you know, this is directed at the security and stability of the state. You know, how this affects outside other countries is secondary.

Mr. MARSHALL. You know, in your opening statement, you mentioned counter-messaging and immediately said, well, you weren't really anxious to use that term, and yet you have just said that it is a good idea for us to be funding, supporting efforts to counter these messages. So why not use the term counter-messaging? Why did you offer that as a hesitation?

Dr. BOUCEK. Well, I have thought a lot about this. And I think counter-messaging implies that there is another narrative with which to advance. And I think doing that is going to generate skepticism and doubt. I don't think that is going to accomplish what it is that, you know, we want to do.

Mr. MARSHALL. So you have in mind that the appropriate approach is to directly respond, "No, you are wrong, because thus and such," as opposed to, "Well, that may be, but there is actually a better deal over here"? Is that what you are essentially saying? The counter-message would be directing somebody to a better way.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think from an American government point of view, I don't think you would want this to look like it had the fingerprints of the American military or the American government on it. I think what you would want to do is you want to figure out ways to——

Mr. MARSHALL. You would like to mobilize kids in the United States to just spend some time on the Internet chatting with people about——

Dr. BOUCEK. No, I wouldn't go that far. I think, you know, there has been a lot of work to identify, you know, individuals and publications and books, pamphlets, et cetera, written in Arabic, Urdu, lots of indigenous languages that are not getting promoted. And I think figuring out ways to get those online so more people read those instead of the other things would be a good way to start.

Mr. MARSHALL. Yes, but you also focus on these chatrooms, and you are interested in interrupting the conversation with some thoughts or at least injecting some thoughts that might discourage people from heading in the direction of believing this stuff that is on there, you know, that sort of thing.

And you did make reference a couple times to this idea that they are not new messages out there. There are some great messages from very accepted, well-known scholars. The question is, how do we get those messages in front of people? Is it worthwhile to consider having an organization of some sort? You know, obviously, funding would have to come from the United States. I doubt there is anybody else out there that would be doing the funding, but perhaps some indirect funding, as well, that has people who watch these chatrooms and, when a subject comes up, interjects, "Oh, wait a minute. You obviously haven't read, you know, thus and such. Here, listen to this quote. Here's what Imam So-and-So or Dr. So-and-So, et cetera, said on this very subject."

Dr. BOUCEK. I think that is a great idea. I mean, I think, you know, when we are thinking about how to engage, I would think, you know, how people engage with violence or militancy, you know, it often tells you about how they are going to disengage from it. And I think you are not trying to reach the people who have already made up their minds. That is not going to be useful.

I think what you want to do is you want to reach the people who are out there looking for answers and don't know how to find the right answers. You know, part of that is, you know, interrupting this process, as you pointed out, which I think is really key.

The other part I would think is——

Mr. MARSHALL. Because you did say that you thought that the State Department program that had just analysts one on one sort of responding to things that are being said on the Internet was effective.

Dr. BOUCEK. I mean, I think I would like to see a multi-tiered, multi-level approach, and I think that is important. Immediate response to some of this is key. I think also kind of pointing out the flaws and the errors in these arguments or whether the moral flaws, I think, are important.

Mr. MARSHALL. I have got 10 seconds left in this first round, and so to both of you, real quickly, any idea how much money you think

we ought to be putting behind this kind of effort? Do you have—has anybody put pen to paper with regard to that money?

Dr. BRACHMAN. I don't think it is a question of money. I think it is—I mean, look at what al Qa'ida has done with very little. I think it is a question about harnessing the right resources in the right ways, and I think that is—we haven't done that yet. And maybe I will try to interject some more thoughts on that here as we keep going.

Mr. MARSHALL. All right.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, I think on that point, it is a matter of strategic planning. I think it is more a matter of we have got, you know, a lot of different pieces doing a lot of different things, but there is no sort of overarching coordination. There is a loose idea. "Well, this kind of worked; this kind of didn't. We are trying this. There is no one"—again, I will come back to sort of a campaign analogy and, you know, a campaign that works, as someone who is watching, you know, you have got your TV. You have got your radio. You have got the content and the message. All that is out there, and you are watching on a day-in-and-day-out basis where to deploy your resources.

I mean, the beauty of the Internet, as you mentioned, is it doesn't cost much. You know, you just need to know, are you missing something? Are there chat sites? Are there, you know, things out there that are going by you? And then to the extent that you have got that covered, what is the right message? I mean, you know, running your own office, you are also always worried about, okay, we have got someone on this, but what they just said is really unhelpful, so you want to make sure you have some messaging control and the right people in place to counter that message. But I think it is a matter of strategic planning.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Yes, go ahead.

Mr. MARSHALL. I certainly agree with that. And one of the reasons why al Qa'ida is able to do this with very little funding is—that is the same reason why they are able to do an awful lot of things with very little funding. They have got very motivated individuals who don't require much in order to get them to do the sorts of things that al Qa'ida would have them do, including spend time on the Internet and if we could——

Mr. SMITH. Plus, of course, sponging off their parents.

Mr. MARSHALL. There you go. So, you know, living in—if we could find folks like that who were similarly motivated, then we wouldn't have to pay them. They would just do it. If we can't, then we are going to have to pay people, then the question comes up. How much time do you think would be involved, how sophisticated do the individuals who are doing this need to be? You know, it is that sort of analysis that, you know, assuming there is a master plan that does contemplate, we want people in these chatrooms ready to dump appropriate counter-ideology information, what are those kinds of people going to cost? They have got to be people who are pretty bright.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Well, sir, it sounded as if you had defined, you know, the typical grad student or junior academic when you were saying, you know, don't make a lot of money, motivated, spend a

lot of time researching and publishing. And so I think there is—I mean, there is an army of us out there, but, you know, what the jihadis have done is they have created something between a salon, you know, the old French salons where you could sit around and muse about great thoughts, and a war room.

And they have put these, you know, together and put them online. And those conversations are public and open, and there is a reason for that. It is problematic to—they structurally screen out people like us. So the moment they know that I am on their forums, they will block my user account, so I can't go in and respond openly like that.

But we do know that, you know, when—when Chris publishes something, when I publish something, they read it, and then they post it to their site and they talk about it. I think something that would be very useful is if we replicated their approach, you know, in a very open, public way, where we brought some of the top, you know, thinkers in our field together, put them in a war room online, and let us have a conversation in a public way. I don't think it costs a lot of money. We need a vehicle.

But, again, they are going to be reading that and reacting to it. And for once, we would be setting the agenda and setting the pace. Right now, in terms of—you know, as you all have said, I mean, it is a monopoly on the discourse. You know, we are forced to react to it, if and when we do.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Dr. BRACHMAN. So we have got the resources.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you.

Sorry. Sorry, Bill. Mr. Shuster.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you.

You had mentioned earlier in your testimony that to radicalize somebody, it is more hands-on. It doesn't just occur on the Internet. To stop somebody from being radicalized, I would imagine it is not as hands-on. Would that be accurate? I mean, we can use the Internet more to our advantage to stop that radicalization, that process?

Dr. BOUCEK. I think what we see from other counter-radicalization programs in other parts of the world, especially in the Middle East, is that it often is a personal interaction. And I think, you know, if you are tangentially interested in this stuff, maybe online, you know, might work.

I think, you know, instead of maybe thinking about this as how people give up their beliefs, I think, you know, you want to get people to not be violent, right? And this might be more about behavior modification than it is about, you know, renunciation of beliefs.

And I think what we see is people who leave militant groups or terrorist organizations don't necessarily stop believing what they believe in. You often leave for very personal reasons. You know, often you become disillusioned with a movement or organization. You have personal reasons for stepping away from active participation in violence.

You might still be a supporter or a fundraiser or, you know, an encourager, but that is different. That is why I think—this might be kind of an academic argument, but I think if we look at this as a spectrum of how you engage and how you disengage, that might be more helpful in kind of coming up with solutions.

Mr. SHUSTER. Right. And some of those other countries in the world—somebody briefly mentioned or talked a little bit about Saudi Arabia, the other—Egypt, some of the countries in Southeast Asia, do they have programs that have been successful or failures? I mean, what is out there that we can learn from?

Dr. BOUCEK. Of the Internet programs or of the kind of prison or other kind of personal programs?

Mr. SHUSTER. Personal programs, either/or, you know, what is out there that has been successful that we should be looking at and studying?

Dr. BOUCEK. Well, I think you see these rehabilitation programs spreading. Just about every national counterterrorism strategy has a disengagement element in it some way or another. Throughout North Africa, you see these programs, Libya, Egypt, Saudi Arabia. The Yemenis tried to do something. Kuwait is going to start doing something like this, Jordan, Syria. Southeast Asia, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Bangladesh, I mean, these are all over, and not just in the Muslim world. There are also programs to disengage right-wing neo-Nazi youth gangs in Scandinavia or, you know, leftist guerillas in Latin America.

I mean, I think there are things that you can learn from them. And a lot of this is about replacing someone's social network with one that is more conducive to them not re-offending.

Mr. SHUSTER. Well, who has—I mean, is there a country out there that we can look to and say they have had success, moderate success? Because, obviously, we have talked about a couple of our programs that haven't worked.

Dr. BOUCEK. In terms of the face-to-face disengagement, I mean, the Saudis have been doing this the longest. It is the best funded. It has put through the most number of people, including people who have been violent. So Singapore often gets talked about as a very successful program, which it is, but it has dealt with, you know, 60 people, of which probably less than 5 are free and clear, none of whom have actively engaged in violence yet. This is all preemptive.

So, you know, whether you like it or not, Saudi Arabia has become a de facto model for other countries. It is, you know, a very specific program to Saudi Arabia, but the Libyans just tried to do something with the Islamic Fighting Group to disengage these guys. The Egyptians did this with the Islamic Group to disengage them.

So I think, you know, there are things we can look at, and this is clearly an area that needs more research. There is so much work done on radicalization and very little done on de-radicalization, disengagement.

Mr. SHUSTER. Right. And the United States, I think, we just saw a case where five Americans traveled to Pakistan or they were arrested there. How great is the threat here, in your view, in America? And I see Great Britain seems to be a growing threat. In the United States we obviously have had some, but, you know, what is your view here in the United States as to the ability to radicalize over the Internet?

Dr. BRACHMAN. I think that is a great question. I think we have always sat about five years behind the U.K.'s experience and so,

you know, had Najibullah Zazi actually pulled off what he allegedly was trying to do, you know, it would have looked a lot like 7/7, the attacks of 2005, attacks in London.

And so I think we are—as I said before, I think more people now have more access to more radical ideological stuff than ever before in more places, in more forums. And they are a lot smarter about how they do it.

So I think, again, we have gone the wrong direction here in the United States. And I don't want to sound like an alarmist or whatever, but if you have more people who are thinking more bad thoughts, then it is more likely that some of them are going to actually do something about that, and I think that is what 2009—as we continue to uncover these plots.

And it is hard, because the indictments and the complaints that are released don't always tell you if there is a jihadist motivation or if it is personal or it is some combination of the two. Again, Nidal Hasan, not quite sure. We know that he was having these interactions with this—this American Yemeni sheikh, Anwar al-Awlaki. We don't know the content of those. They were dismissed as innocuous.

But the problem is, what if he was talking about a concept, say, like al wala' wal bara', right, which is not a concept that most of us in this room know, but if you do know it, then you know it is the core adoption of al Qa'ida, right? So you see it, and you say, "That is an esoteric religious concept. It must not be too bad."

Well, actually, yes. It means you are either with us or against us, so to speak, and it is the premise of everything al Qa'ida is founded on. So we need to get smarter, I think, about what is problematic, and we need to get more granular in terms of knowing threats when we see them and, importantly, knowing threats—knowing what aren't threats when we see them, too.

But I think it is a bad situation we are in right now.

Mr. SHUSTER. Thank you very much.

Mr. SMITH. Mr. Cooper.

Mr. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

To follow up on a Jim Marshall question, the war room that you were proposing, Dr. Brachman, how would you make sure that enough eyeballs visited that work room, war room?

Dr. BRACHMAN. Well, they are already visiting us separately, and I think you bring us, you know, us, whatever, the people who do this for a living—and I say us, because there are very few of us, unfortunately. And I think over the past few years, the field has shrunk, not gotten bigger.

Mr. SMITH. Why would that be? Sorry to interrupt, but why—it seems like a fairly hot topic at the moment. Why would it be——

Dr. BRACHMAN. Yes, it is baffling to me.

Mr. SMITH. Okay.

Dr. BRACHMAN. I can't figure it out.

Mr. SMITH. I was looking for that keen academic answer that through it you could tell us why, but okay.

Dr. BRACHMAN. And, you know, maybe Chris has some thoughts. I think some of them have gone on the inside and stopped publishing openly. Others have taken other opportunities. But we are not repopulating the field with grad students, again, because there

aren't departments dedicated to the study of al Qa'ida strategy, because academia still is very distant. The legacy of Vietnam, you know, makes them hesitant to engage with CIA [Central Intelligence Agency] or DOD in an overt way.

And, you know, I was told when I left to go do a fellowship at the CIA that I would be blacklisted from most universities, in terms of a faculty position. That is kind of just the sense that one gets, and it is not—you know, these are——

Mr. SMITH. So you do know why?

Dr. BRACHMAN. Maybe, so——

Mr. SMITH. Not as baffled as you appear.

Dr. BRACHMAN. There is a cultural disconnect, I think, between that. But I think that because the content would be based in primary source analysis of the adversary's message, we know the adversary, you know, to use that speak, will be there and try to see what it is we know about them and then try to respond to it.

And, again, the more that we force them to react to us, the less that they are thinking great thoughts. And, you know, case in point, you know, Zawahiri—every time, you know, his mentor says something, he is forced to—he just, you know, is neurotic about responding. And these guys are all like that.

And so they want to make sure they don't miss out on what arguments are being made against them, and they need to make sure that they have a better argument. I think that is a very important insight that we haven't understood and leveraged to our advantage.

Mr. COOPER. I think your theory seems to be, if we build it, they will come, and they are sufficiently neurotic that they will always respond, and this won't be dismissed as some sort of lame Western, you know, no disparaging toward the Voice of America, but, you know, kind of a boring Western programming?

Dr. BRACHMAN. That is a fair assessment of what I am saying, yes, sir.

Mr. COOPER. Help me understand why so few Muslim clerics denounce Muslim-on-Muslim violence. Why is there no more talk about that or—you know, because it is a pretty hierarchical religion, and there are a lot of serious and senior religious figures. There are many sources of authority, universities and mosques, but yet it seems to be almost a code of silence, whereas, you know, a Danish cartoon will spark riots halfway around the world, and other seemingly minor things, like a Swiss vote on architecture codes, and yet, you know, there can be market bombing in which 150 Muslims are killed by Muslims, and there is almost no response.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think that is a great question. I am not sure that I have a very satisfactory answer for you. I think in part——

Mr. COOPER. Are the Muslim clerics not online or——

Dr. BOUCEK. Well, I mean, I think there are more and more of them who are getting online, but I think, you know, at the same time, I don't think—you know, the Christian religious leaders always speak out against all violence, either. So, I mean, I think in recent years, we see more and more Muslim scholars or sheikhs coming out to speak out against this about why this is wrong.

I think some of these other issues—you know, if it is cartoons or the minaret issue in Switzerland, I think feed into other griev-

ances, which may not necessarily always have to do with religion. I think, you know, a lot of this is other ways to release tension within society, you know, and I think there are a lot of problems in the Arab world, in the Muslim world, and I think these things aren't always directly tied to religion.

I think, you know, over the last couple of years, we have seen a number of scholars who have come out and said, you know, violence is not acceptable. This is, you know, destroying—the idea behind this movement—I think, you know, Dr. Brachman can probably speak to this better than I can, but I think it is something that is happening kind of slowly happening, I think.

So I am sorry that that is not probably the comprehensive answer you would like.

Mr. COOPER. I appreciate your insight. And when Tom Friedman wrote his column today on the virtual Afghanistan, I thought that made this hearing topic even more interesting, because as a recruiting device, you know, if they are able to attract U.S. citizens, this is astonishing, but it seems to be happening more and more.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. I want to follow up on sort of what works in terms of the U.S. government activity, because I think it would be a mistake to look at it and say, "Well, obviously, you know, U.S. government is not credible with our target audience here, so therefore we should, you know, be very distant and keep our hands off." I think it is true that the U.S. government is not credible with our target audience. But I think even within that lack of credibility, there are still things that we can do, and I think you have given some insights, you know, just openly engaging in the discussion, countering the arguments that are out there, even if you have a little bit of a bias, your argument still has weight.

I think it is also fascinating—and I understand why Zawahiri and all these people would want to respond—you know, we all intellectually, I think, have that—you know, even if it is—even if it is someone who we cannot stand, who we do not respect, if they say something that makes us look bad, you just can't help yourself sometimes if you are at all—if you consider yourself to be at all intellectual, to dive in and go, "That is a load of crap, and let me tell you why." So I do think that that is an important insight.

And so I think, in terms of how we put this together, I think the United States government can, in fact, play a very effective role, which we are not playing at the moment, in the online competition that we are talking about. We have got to be smart about it. Not everything we do works, clearly, and we have got to learn some of the lessons you have talked about today, but we definitely have to be more engaged and more organized than we are right now.

Towards that end, two questions about specific things that we have tried. One is a follow-up on—you talked about the State Department effort to basically—you know, I have this cartoonish image in my mind of happy Muslims in the United States going to Disneyland and so forth, and, "See, it is all good."

I am a little more curious as to why that didn't work. I can kind of guess, because I think what would appeal to, you know, Muslims outside of the U.S., you know, sort of a, "Look, they are all making a lot of money. They are doing good." It is not a materialistic ap-

proach. And so if you are presenting it, you know, Muslims are great and fine, because look at all the things they have and how—I mean, that is really—that would have worked against the Soviet Union, not going to work in this context.

On the other hand, if you were presenting a message that said, you know, you are free to practice your religion, and you showed Muslims sort of living as Muslims in the West freely and openly, adhering to their religion, I could see that being more effective.

So I am curious on that piece. Hit that, and then I have got a question about a Department of Defense program called Minerva that is trying to fund some academic research, as well, but try that first one, in terms of why exactly it didn't work, what was wrong with the message.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Sir, I will take a real quick shot at that. So I think, for the target demographic, those people who have bought in this, maybe not the militant side of it, but the ideological, ultra-conservatism, they are already—if you are a Muslim, you cannot live freely in the West. They have already subscribed to that belief, and there is very little you can do to change that. The West is inherently restrictive on your ability to freely practice your religion, and it continuously tempts you.

And, you know, maybe Chris can talk more about that, but so I think it just—the argument fails on its premise. You can't convince them of that argument. And, plus, when you have military forces in two Islamic countries, it doesn't matter. Everything that you say about how great life is, it is irrelevant.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think a lot of this has to do with perceptions. I think, you know, you probably don't need to convince people that freedom or democracy or affluence or these points that you raise are good ideas. I think they want to know why it doesn't apply to them.

And I think a lot of the grievances that get identified in the Muslim world have to do with policies. You know, I think, you know, when those programs are going on, how many people were being, you know, harassed at—at TSA checkpoints? Or how many people weren't getting visas? There are students who are coming here to study, things that we should be encouraging——

Mr. SMITH. We are all being harassed at TSA checkpoints.

Dr. BOUCEK. Right, but, I mean, I think this—I mean, every time you go to the Muslim world, somebody will tell you—every time I go to Saudi Arabia, "I am not coming back to the United States, because I missed my flight, and my kids were embarrassed, and my wife had to do whatever." So, I mean, I think this is part of it.

I think, you know, it is probably unpopular to talk about the policies that feed into these grievances.

Mr. SMITH. No, I think it is very important.

Dr. BOUCEK. I think if we can engage on some of those issues and say why this is going on, why these policies happen, and to correct those misunderstandings, that is going to be key.

Mr. SMITH. Could you talk just briefly about this Department of Defense program called the Minerva Initiative, which was focused on sort of growing, you know, the academic and intellectuals, just as you have been talking about. Has that been effective or not?

Dr. BRACHMAN. So my response to Minerva is it did attempt to address—I quote one of the foremost experts on Sovietology and the rise of the intellectual discipline of Sovietology in the United States in my testimony, and I had the chance to talk with him a little bit about this.

The problem with Minerva is that it funded the same academics who were already being funded by the U.S. government, whereas what we did in the Cold War was we expanded it. We had programs that brought in hundreds, if not thousands of grad students and academics into the fold. This Minerva identified a very small group of people who were already on the—you know, on the dime, I guess, for the government and just reinforced that. It didn't create a new generation of academics and scholars across discipline in a way that is robust. I think it just was more of the same.

I think it is important, but it didn't accomplish the fundamental revolution that people hoped it would.

Mr. SMITH. The most—go ahead. Sorry.

Dr. BOUCEK. Excuse me. I was just going to add, I think the idea behind Minerva is great, right, to enhance, you know, more academic research. Some of the projects that were funded personally I am really surprised at. Why there is a program to fund, you know, Baathist document exploitation, I don't quite understand. I don't know what that is going to do down the road. I don't think there are too many more Baathist regimes that we are going to have to deal with in the future, right? I mean, Syria aside.

But I think there are other programs that probably should have gotten the money. I can understand focusing on the Chinese military or some of these other things, but maybe these weren't the best issues probably to—for the Department of Defense to focus its resources on.

Mr. SMITH. I also think we should look into very closely the issue that the academic institutions in our country are now so distant from the DOD and the CIA that there is that problem sort of melding the two, and they have been forced—I know we had this when we were trying to, you know, do the human terrain teams, you know, part of the problem was, we were going after, you know, archeologists, sociologists, people like that. And in the academic world, there were quite a few who chose not to participate because of the perception of participating in part of, you know, Americans', you know, militant policies.

I have gone over time. I want to get to Mr. Marshall, if he has anything more.

Mr. MARSHALL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

You know, on the one hand, you principally, as our witnesses, have been talking about intercepting budding jihadists who are on the Internet sort of looking for guidance and being there at the right time to interject the right observation. You could do it a number of different ways. If you seem like an open and honest, one-on-one kind of, "Hey, that is not the way things work. This is how I think it works," or the idea was tossed out—this has all been written about in the past, so you have got the right kind of people there who can just sort of interject, the great quotes, the great, you know, passages, et cetera.

So that is intercepting the budding jihadists. And then, Dr. Brachman, you have this concept in mind that perhaps a war room, properly funded, staffed, could engage leadership, militant jihadist leadership in such a way that it is distractive. It is spending a bunch of its time responding to jabs that are poking holes in ideology as opposed to spending a bunch of its time recruiting, planning, executing, those sorts of things, attacks.

In both instances—Jim, following up on my question, how you are going to do this, you said war room. Well, how are you going to get people to come to the war room? Compel them to do so? Send out a worldwide edict, "You must come here and pay attention to what we are doing on this little Web site somewhere"?

It occurs to me that Al Jazeera is missing a huge opportunity to grow its market share. I don't know why Al Jazeera doesn't organize a chatroom and organize it in a very effective way so that if you go to that chatroom, you can—if you are a novice, get to the right place where you can see and engage in conversations that are handled by Al Jazeera. If you are an expert, you can go find what you want to be chatting about or find information about.

And I am no Internet expert. I am, you know, all thumbs, in effect, when it comes to that sort of thing. I don't chat, at least on the Internet. And—but, you know, it is—you see some places, the New York Times, gosh, you know, an article comes out. If it is at all interesting, within just a few days, there have been 500 or 600 bloggers who have commented on the article. And from time to time, I have found it very helpful to read the article and then read what people are saying about the article.

So some credible entity actually—and credible in the Arab world, not us, and in the Arab world, I think Al Jazeera is interested in not only market share, but also credibility. It is going to want to manage something like that in a credible way. And I also think Al Jazeera might be a place that a lot of people go to. If they understood that was the go-to place to have chats about stuff like this, then you wouldn't get cut off when you wanted to come on to the Al Jazeera site and advance your ideas or the war room wouldn't or the individuals wouldn't. What do you guys think?

Dr. BOUCEK. Two quick points. I think the point about intercepting kind of budding jihadis, it is a great point. And I think it is probably useful to think about this, in addition to taking away a negative, we also need to give people a positive, right? There needs to be—for those people who are religiously inclined, there has to be a positive way to exercise their faith, and that is something that we see across this engagement program.

So I think that is kind of key. I think this idea of a—if Al Jazeera——

Mr. MARSHALL. If I could quickly interrupt, the war room concept Dr. Brachman's advocating really doesn't do that, what you are describing, and that is more of the State Department one-on-one kind of stuff. It is a very different——

Dr. BOUCEK. I love this idea of the Al Jazeera chatroom point, and I think—I am a big fan of these kind of experiential learning things, and I think a great way would be to bring editors and journalists and reporters from the Arab world here to spend time, you know, with the New York Times comment section, right? Once you

learn and you see how this works, when you go back, you are going to take this whole different perspective.

I think Al Jazeera is one of the best things to happen to Arab media, and we need to encourage more professionalism. Through professional exchanges, that would be a great way to do that, I think.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Sir, I will just—kind of staying on the war room idea, last year, I wrote a 10-page open letter to Ayman al-Zawahiri. I published it in Arabic and English on a number of forums. Most of the forums immediately erased it and told me that I was a Zionist crusader dog, and that I would burn in hell for all of eternity. In some of the forums, however, they took me on.

Mr. MARSHALL. And your view of that prediction?

Dr. BRACHMAN. No comment. So—but in some of the other forums, they went after me, and, in fact, I got a nice compliment from one of the hardest core guys in the Arabic forum. Somebody asked, "Should Zawahiri respond to me?" And he said, "Well, this guy seems to know Zawahiri and our ideology as well or better than we know ourselves. So he can't—he will have to respond to it, in some way."

And I think that is the premise of the war room, that we don't have to mandate people come. They will naturally gravitate. They already are doing it, because we are saying things that show that we know them as well as they know themselves, and I think that is something we haven't established yet that will be incredibly enticing to them, to those on the fence, and to the broader community, that we are no dummies at this. We can take them on, on their own terrain as well or better than they can to us.

Mr. SMITH. We have a quorum call at the moment, 10 minutes left to go on that, and then I guess there are a few minutes left in the debate on the issue. I don't feel any particular—well, let's not say this into an open mike.

It is possible that, you know, the conversation here will be more important than registering our presence on the floor, so we will keep going, but Members who want to leave and go do that, I understand. And I don't have too much more.

I wanted to see, Jim, did you—sorry, okay. We probably will be able to make it then.

I guess, you know, the biggest thing is I think this discussion has been very, very helpful, and I think it is great, and I think it is sort of like we are looking at a big problem, trying to figure out what works, what doesn't work, coming up with some good ideas, you know, learning from people who have had experience with different sets of ideas of things that have worked in different forums.

I think my greatest concern in this whole process is that this isn't going on at the level of the United States government that it needs to be going on. There needs to be, whether it is, you know, NSC [National Security Council], State Department, you know, some group of folks pulled together on a regular basis who are focused on this.

I think in much the same way, you know, post-9/11, even pre-9/11, for that matter, we were very focused on bin Laden and al Qa'ida. Now, we didn't know as much about them as we do now and weren't as committed to it, certainly, as we were after 9/11,

you know, but there is a group of people right now, every single day, all day long, who are thinking about where the top al Qa'ida targets are, what they are up to, and how we can stop them.

And they are getting ideas and plans and modifying them and bringing more key players into that conversation. The same is not happening on the messaging front, on the ideological struggle. And you guys are great, but there are only two of you, and you don't have the full resources in the United States government behind you, and so we are going to, on this committee, I believe, look for ways to try to push that within the administration to say, you know, we need that war room that you are talking about, however you want to compose it and whatever ideas come out of it.

I am sure the war room will come up with some bad ideas. They always do. But you will learn from it, you will get better, you will figure out what messaging works, what forums you have to be on, some of the ideas that were raised by our colleagues here I think will prove helpful, and that is what I really think we need to do.

I don't have any further questions. Did either of you have any good of the order closing comments?

Dr. BRACHMAN. I will just make one quick comment. In 2007, September, Abu Yahya al-Libi, a guy who I call the next bin Laden, he is a name who is not very familiar to people, although he is, I think, the most important, thoughtful—he makes bin Laden look like, you know, a kindergartener, I think, in terms of his thinking intellectually.

He was asked in an open interview with an al Qa'ida media outlet how the United States could defeat al Qa'ida ideologically. And he says, Well, it is easy. I have got a six-point strategy. And the interviewer said, Well, you probably don't want to give the Americans a six-point strategy for how to defeat us, right?

And he said, no, no, no, it is okay. They are not smart enough to implement it. They are kind of doing these things on the margins, but if I tell them, A, they can't do it because they are inept and they are stupid, and, second, because I am laying it out, I am inoculating our movement from their ability to do this, so it doesn't matter anyways. It becomes irrelevant.

And he goes through each of these points, what he says that we could do, and a lot of the things we have raised here today, but they are happening in very ad hoc, one-off kind of way. So, I mean, this is the intellectual bravado that al Qa'ida feels that they have, that they can give us a strategy, and it is probably the most sophisticated strategy I have seen on how to defeat al Qa'ida ideologically.

Mr. MARSHALL. Would you mind maybe sharing that in writing with us? We would like to know it, and we may not be able to implement it, it might not be effective, but——

Dr. BRACHMAN. Right. So, you know, the first point he says is promoting guys who used to be really senior in al Qa'ida who have then renounced, and so these are people like Dr. Fadl, Zawahiri's old mentor in Egypt. When he comes out and writes a book, it really hurts them. And he says, it really hurts us when things like this occur.

Second is exploiting our mistakes. So al Qa'ida has got a history of shooting itself, you know, in the foot. And simply pointing that out, he says, continuously doing this, beating that drum hurts.

Mr. SMITH. Well, for instance, mistakes include, you know, bombing the wedding party in Jordan.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Exactly.

Mr. SMITH. You know, some of the stuff Zarqawi was doing in Iraq. Yes, and that is something that, you know, I think we always make the mistake—you know, it is sort of like, there is a great argument we have, but after a while, we get tired of it. I can always tell a really good campaign when they just keep pounding and pounding and pounding on the same point to the point where you are sick of it, but if it is a really great argument for your side, never let it go.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Right. Al Qa'ida kills Muslims.

Mr. SMITH. Exactly, and the specific examples that are most heinous.

Dr. BRACHMAN. Right. So that is number two.

Number three, as he says, any time that a mainstream Islamic cleric who is respected issues a fatwa or religious ruling against us, it hurts us. Yousuf al-Qaradawi is probably one of the most popular guys who has been very actively against al Qa'ida. That is very problematic for them. So the more mainstream Muslims come out against them, that hurts.

Dividing and conquering their movement, turning Muslim Brotherhood against al Qa'ida, against, you know, Jundallah, against showing—because any insurgency needs to bleed into the populace, separate—or, you know, erase those distinctions. And so the more we can reinsert those shades of gray into the conversation, the harder it is for them to accomplish what they want to accomplish. That is four.

Number five is neutralizing the guiding lights of al Qa'ida. These are the top clerics. Any time you can take these clerics down, shut them up, by whatever means one thinks is appropriate, that really, really hurts them, because these guys have a disproportionate impact to advance the movement.

And, finally, he says, identify superficial disputes and make those emblematic of methodological flaws within al Qa'ida. And this is where the work that academics are doing, I think, is important.

So he is not saying make anything up or fabricate anything. He says it is all out there; it is just it needs to be turned against us in the right way by the right people.

Mr. MARSHALL. Mr. Chairman. It is kind of interesting, the six-part plan has nothing to do with most of the things that we are doing.

Mr. SMITH. Yes. Yes. No, I think that is absolutely a good point to close on. Actually, I should let Dr. Boucek, if you have any——

Dr. BOUCEK. I would just say one point, which I think is—you highlighted this really key point about highlighting the errors in this organization or the mistakes that get made, right? And I think Jarret talked about this notion of loyalty and disavowal, which is really important.

Key, also, though is this idea of, it is an individual's responsibility to do good, not only to stop wrong, but to do good. And highlighting all the times when that doesn't happen, every time that, you know, a mentally disabled person is recruited to be a suicide bomber, every time civilians are killed, I think if you look at what the Saudis did, they drove a wedge between the population and extremists, to say they are not acting in your interests, and there are so many examples that you can highlight to say, "Why do you want these guys hanging out in your neighborhood? Why do you want them in your mosque? Why do you want your son to associate them, with them, when they are clearly engaged in immoral activity?"

This is an organization, idea, a movement based on improving morality, right? And we are totally not engaged in that at all. So with that, I will conclude. Thank you.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you. This has been fascinating and very helpful, and we certainly plan to stay in touch with both of you. Appreciate you taking the time.

And with that, we are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:23 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

DECEMBER 16, 2009

PREPARED STATEMENTS SUBMITTED FOR THE RECORD

DECEMBER 16, 2009

Statement of Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee Chairman Adam Smith Hearing on Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization

December 16, 2009

"Today, the Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities Subcommittee will meet to take testimony on the use of cyberspace as a medium for radicalization and counter-radicalization. This is an important discussion, and I want to thank our witnesses for attending and lending their expert opinions. We welcome you and your thoughts.

"The focus of the hearing will be to explore various case studies of how violent extremist groups utilize cyberspace to spread their ideological message, radicalize and recruit members to their cause. It will further explore how we can disrupt this process and provide lessons learned for U.S. programs aiming to disrupt recruitment to and promote disengagement from terrorist groups.

"In order to counter this message and undermine recruitment efforts, we must first understand the message and the medium violent extremist groups are using to send this message. Once we understand the message and the medium, we must be able to respond quickly and effectively to debunk their message.

"We cannot allow violent extremist group to propagate a false message that demonizes the United States without responding. Currently, we are not responding quickly enough or effectively enough. This must change.

"Al Qaeda and its affiliated groups understand the power of a strongly crafted message and see the internet as much as battle space as the streets of Kandahar. Indeed, we've seen them shift resources from planning attacks to shaping global media perception instead. We must meet them on this battle space in a more comprehensive and effective way.

"Moreover, it is not sufficient to simply deny and debunk their message - we must also be sending a message of our own. Credible resources must be utilized to offer a moderate counter-narrative that shapes a positive message about the United States and sends a negative message about violent extremist groups and the violent ideology they espouse.

"Over the last several months we have seen a number of prime examples of violent extremists groups utilizing cyberspace to recruit members that underscore the importance of why we must improve our efforts. For example, five young American Muslims were arrested in Pakistan and accused of seeking to join a local terrorist organization and receive training. These young men are believed to have used the social networking sites Facebook and YouTube to connect with extremist groups in Pakistan. This instance, and well as many other recent incidents, underscore the urgent necessity of why must get better at disrupting this process and improve upon our efforts at disengagement among terrorist groups.

"The fact that we continue to see individuals recruited through similar means is disconcerting for our intelligence and counterterrorism efforts. Therefore, it is vitally important that we sufficiently monitor and counter – on a comprehensive scale – violent extremist's efforts to recruit, self-radicalize, organize and network with like-minded people, and create ideological narratives that undermine or attack our efforts to defeat violent extremist groups.

"In order to sufficiently monitor and counter these efforts, we must first understand how extremists groups think and operate, and how that translates to their utilization of cyberspace as a tool to recruit, proselytize, and spread active misinformation that bolsters their goals.

"We must also better understand what actions the U.S. can take in shaping a strategy to disrupt the radicalization and recruitment process for violent extremist group. That strategy might include how to deal with cyberspace recruitment, as well as how the US might structure and implement effective disengagement or de-radicalization programs.

"Today, this subcommittee will begin to look at these important questions. Again, I thank the witnesses and look forward to an illuminating conversation on how we can more effectively tackle these critical challenges."

Mr. Miller Opening Statement for Hearing on Understanding Cyberspace as a Medium for Radicalization and Counter-Radicalization

December 16, 2009

Washington, D.C.—The House Armed Services Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities today held a hearing to understand how cyberspace can be used as a medium to radicalize and counter radicalization of potential extremists. The subcommittee's Ranking Member, U.S. Rep. Jeff Miller (R-Florida), released the following prepared remarks for the hearing:

"Over the course of the year, this subcommittee has examined numerous topics—terrorist threat finance, irregular warfare, and counterinsurgency, to name just a few—all of which have proven invaluable to understanding the challenges our nation faces in combating al-Qaeda and the scourge of violent extremism. In fact, our first hearing of this Congress addressed strategic communication and how our national strategy can better counter the virulent and hateful message that al-Qaeda and other violent, extremist groups spread.

"Our focus has, to a great extent, been on external efforts—what we can do to prevent, deter, and defeat threats before they reach American soil. Recent events, however, highlight the need to examine the role that radicalization plays in feeding the grinder of violence both in foreign lands and, most importantly, in the U.S. itself. The list of 'homegrown' terrorist attacks and terrorist plots is long. Just in the past year, we have seen:

"The arrest of David Headley (aka Daood Gilani) and Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed, a retired Pakistan Army major, for a planned terrorist attack in Copenhagen, Denmark and potential ties to the 26 Nov 2008 Mumbai terrorist attacks;

"The arrest of Michael Finton, who is purported to be an idolizer of American-born Taliban fighter John Walker Lindh, for plotting to kill federal employees with a car bomb in Illinois;

"The charging of William Boyd and Hysen Sherifi with international terrorism for conducting reconnaissance of the Marine Corps Base in Quantico;

"The indictment of Najibullah Zazi of Denver on charges of planning terrorist attacks on New York commuter trains;

"The arrest of three U.S. citizens and a Haitian for plotting to bomb a Riverdale Temple and a Jewish Center in New York;

"The indictment of Abdulhakim Mujahid Muhammad, previously known as Carlos Bledsoe, on one count of capital murder and 15 counts of terrorist acts related to the shooting at a Little Rock military recruiting office; and

"The horrific events at Fort Hood in early November when Major Nidal Hassan, an Army mental-health professional, turned on his fellow service men and women, killing 13 and wounding 30.

"And these are just some of the major events from 2009 that all point to an increasing potential for domestic terrorist acts perpetrated by people who have either been radicalized or inspired by violent, extremist messages.

"One of the primary means that al-Qaeda and other extremist groups use to spread their narrative is the Internet. In a February 2009 terrorism assessment, Dennis Blair, the Director of National Intelligence, cited the proliferation of radical Salafi Internet sites and of aggressive and violent anti-Western rhetoric, that provide a link between U.S.-based individuals and extremist networks overseas. Beyond being a mere source of radical ideological content, the Internet provides a potential communications venue for like-minded individuals to coordinate and plan terrorist acts.

"Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano commented recently that 'Home-based terrorism is here. And, like violent extremism abroad, it will be part of the threat picture we must now confront.' In order to confront this threat, we must understand the vehicles that are being used to radicalize or inspire a receptive or vulnerable audience with extremist, violent, and twisted messages. Likewise, the U.S. must be equal to the task and implement comprehensive counter-radicalization programs in these very same media, something I believe we have failed to do in an effective manner as we have spent many years muddling through strategic communication and the 'war of ideas'.

"With that in mind, I welcome today's witnesses both of whom should be able to illuminate the role that the Internet and other media play in the spread of violent, extremist messaging and how we can effectively apply counter-radicalization strategies in those very same venues to inoculate the American populace against the skewed narrative of al-Qaeda and its ilk. Thank you for joining us. I look forward to your testimony."

STATEMENT OF

JARRET BRACHMAN

BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,

UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

ON THE TOPIC OF

UNDERSTANDING CYBERSPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

16 DECEMBER 2009

STATEMENT OF
DR. JARRET M. BRACHMAN
BEFORE THE HOUSE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TERRORISM,
UNCONVENTIONAL THREATS AND CAPABILITIES

December 16, 2009

On 14 February 2007, I had the privilege of testifying before this subcommittee on the topic of emerging trends within the global al-Qaida movement. In my 2007 testimony, I sought to outline the broad spectrum of al-Qaida activism, touching on the various categories including, al-Qaida ideologues, propagandists, strategists, pundits, enthusiasts, and others. I emphasized the fact that individuals from all over the world were filling those roles with various degrees of sophistication and connectivity to the al-Qaida organization. In other words, I argued that al-Qaida as a global movement was growing smarter, more functionally differentiated and increasingly formalized in its approach – it had cemented its ideological core and was concentrating on building itself out, not just operationally, but intellectually, culturally and socially.

One of the central points of my 2007 testimony was that the global al-Qaida movement was pioneering more avenues of participation, particularly by way of the internet, so that more people in more places could get more involved in more ways with supporting al-Qaida. Reflecting the thinking of forward-looking jihadist strategists like Abu Musab al-Suri, al-Qaida was looking more and more like a global social movement, not just a multilayered organization. I argued that the global al-Qaida movement was on the upswing and that the natural outcome of this increase in ideological participation and activity would invariably translate into increased operational activity.

I also made a point of emphasizing the fact that one of the most popular books being downloaded off the internet was one entitled, *39 Ways to Serve and Participate in Jihad,* which was penned by a now neutralized Saudi al-Qaida member. The book argues that, even if a supporter of al-Qaida cannot or will not travel to the front-lines, places like Iraq and Afghanistan, there are at least thirty-nine other categories of activities that they can be doing from the comfort of their own home. Those thirty-nine categories of behavior expanded the ways that individuals could promote al-Qaida's ideology and capabilities.

Since February 2007, al-Qaida's global movement has indeed made deeper inroads into the English-speaking world. The United States is has seen more, not less, jihadist conversation, and perhaps more concerning, jihadist-inspired terrorist plots. What is most problematic is that many of the recent plots uncovered in 2009 contained direct operational ties with the al-Qaida organization and its affiliates.

Beyond the global al-Qaida movement's operational-level advancement, the collective sophistication, knowledge and activism of its English-language supporters has also increased. Ideological adherents to and supporters of al-Qaida have now reached a point where they are

virtually indistinguishable from their Arabic-speaking counterparts in their knowledge of key authors, texts, arguments and leadership. They are consuming al-Qaida media products at a rate and nuance that is on par with the Arabic forums. And an ever-growing amount of al-Qaida literature and media products are being translated into English and disseminated broadly by way of the internet.

Importantly, a-Qaida should be seen as having undergone a metamorphosis in recent years. I would contend that al-Qaida has transformed from a terrorist organization that selectively leverages the media to advance its objectives into a media organization that selectively leverages terrorism to advance its objectives. This strategic recalibration has helped the al-Qaida's aging Senior Leadership reclaim a role in a now globally dispersed movement dominated by younger, more active personalities. It has also helped propel the global al-Qaida ideological movement because the organization now serves the role of a terrorist force-multiplier as much or more as it does a terrorist group.

In short, the al-Qaida organization as well as the global al-Qaida movement has extended its ideological tentacles globally, particularly in the United States. The English-speaking jihadist world has now reached 'cruising speed' in terms of its ability to independently adhere to al-Qaida's ideology: it no longer requires the proverbial hand-holding of the Arabic-language supporters.

Despite this noticeable encroachment of al-Qaida's ideology into the English-speaking world, little has changed in terms of this nation's commitment to combating the sources of that global movement: the ideas underlying this movement.

For nearly four years, a small cadre of voices, including myself, have been advocating the need for the United States to invest in a series of initiatives that advances the ongoing study of al-Qaida. Such an initiative would focus on leveraging diverse expertise to understand al-Qaida as they understand themselves, focusing on the ideological and strategic communication dimensions of the organization. But perhaps more importantly, it would focus on understanding the historical, social and cultural contexts from which al-Qaida emerges. What the United States needs today is a fresh perspective on the intersection of scholarship and government. We need to once again invest in the intellectual capital of our graduate students and young researchers who are doing work on projects that may not be directly applicable to military and strategic needs but that provide long-term social-cultural insights necessary.

I will recommend to this subcommittee an initiative that leverages a virtual network of non-governmental scholars, academics and researchers who are already doing cutting-edge work related, not just to the global al-Qaida movement, but to area studies, to history to anthropology and sociology. It is by empowering America's intellectual resources and making their insights accessible both to the cutting-edge practitioners and the broader public – including our enemies – that the United States is likely to find the most success.

English-Language Jihadist Use of Cyberspace

2009 was a disastrous year for America in the number of jihadist terrorist plots that were uncovered. It follows, however, on the heels of several years wherein jihadist activity in the United States and the broader English-speaking world was increasing in pervasiveness and seriousness. The common thread across most of these plots is that there had been some kind of cyber activity. In this section, I will briefly review some of the highest profile cases and the nature of the internet usage being reported.

In May 2007, a group of Albanian Americans were arrested for plotting to attack Fort Dix. Although unsophisticated, the group seems to have been dedicated to the cause of global jihadism. According to noted al-Qaida specialist, Evan Kohlmann,

> Aside from having an unsettling interest in acquiring assault rifles, these young men had separately downloaded hundreds of megabytes of hardcore terror propaganda videos from the web, including the wills of Sept. 11 hijackers and the July 7 London suicide bombers, and instructional materials on how to build improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and carry out sniper attacks -- and they knew all about radical Yemeni-American cleric Anwar al-Awlaki and his online lecture series "Constants on the Path of Jihad." [1]

What becomes clear is that this kind of use of the internet for both operational and ideological purposes was not anomalous. Former Georgia Tech student, Syed Haris Ahmed, 24, was brought to trial in 2009 for his jihadist activities in 2005 and 2006. Ahmad had allegedly contemplated an attack on Dobbins Air Reserve Base, traveled to Pakistan in an attempt to join mujahidin forces in fighting, took "casing videos" of Washington D.C. landmarks, all as an undergraduate. It was while in college, at the nearby Al-Farooq Masjid mosque, that he met Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, who was charged alongside Ahmed.

Together, the two seemed to radicalize and militarize one another. Ahmed would reportedly tell federal agents that he also tried to recruit others to go with him to Pakistan and join a military training camp. Must of this attempted recruiting was done by way of email. Allegedly, Ahmed used code words in his email correspondence including, "membership" (a passport), "the land of the two rivers" (Iraq), "curry land" (Pakistan), "picnic" (a meeting).[2]

Ahmed and Sadequee had reportedly made contact, via the internet, with two other concerning parties. One was members of the "Toronto 18," a cell charged with plotting to overthrow the Canadian Parliament and bomb a power plant and the Canadian stock exchange. Ahmed and Sadequee also drove to Washington D.C. where they reportedly took 60 surveillance videos,

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[1] Evan Kohlmann. "A Web of Lone Wolves -Fort Hood shows us that Internet jihad is not a myth." *Foreign Policy.* November 13, 2009. http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/11/13/a_web_of_lone_wolves

[2] Bill Rankin . "Trial nears for ex-Tech student - Syed Haris Ahmed is accused of conspiracy to provide support for acts of terrorism." *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.* May 31, 2009.

which they subsequently transferred to. Younis Tsouli, a well-known al-Qaida propagandist and web-node operating out of the United Kingdom going by the moniker, "Irhabi007."

The accused shooter from a June 1, 2009 attack against a military recruiting center in Little Rock, Arkansas, Abdulhakim Muhammad, had reportedly used the internet, including Google Maps, to search and map several Jewish organizations, a child care center, a Baptist church, a post office and military recruiting centers in the southeastern U.S. and New York and Philadelphia.[3] Although little more is known publically about his internet activity, these kinds of locations, if indeed targets, fit with those that would ideologically targeted by an adherent of al-Qaida's ideology.

Abdur Syed provides another useful case of how American jihadist have been using the internet for operational coordination. Since early 2008, retired Pakistani major, Abdur Rehman Hashim Syed, a resident of Chicago, Illinois, began what would become extensive internet-based correspondence with at least two other individuals, one of whom is the American, David Headley. The men were discussing something they referred to as, "Mickey Mouse Project," which according to a recently unsealed criminal complaint, involved planning for one or more attacks directed at the Danish newspaper, *Jyllands-Posten*, the paper that published cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad in 2005.

According to the complaint, David Headley, who also lived in Chicago, had used the internet to post comments like, "I feel disposed towards violence for the offending parties," on Yahoo! discussion group, entitled "Abdalians." By 2009, the men were using multiple email accounts to coordinate with one another about plans for an attack against the newspaper and its employees. They also used the internet to coordinate with a representative from the Lashkar-e Taiba terrorist organization about the attack as well as with Ilyas Kashmiri, operational chief for Harakat ul Jihad Islami. The men also used the internet for surveillance and reconnaissance purposes. When he was arrested, FBI agents found a memory stick on him that contained 10 surveillance videos, including footage of the newspaper office and Danish military barracks.[4]

In February 2009, the United Kingdom tried and convicted a Muslim convert described as the "least cunning" terrorist ever to come before a British court for his botched suicide nail bombing.[5] The 22-year-old, diagnosed with a host of medical conditions, was given a life sentence at the Old Bailey after pleading guilty to attempted murder and preparing an act of terrorism in May 2008. The court was told that he acted alone, although media reported that he had been in contact with at least two other al-Qaida supporters likely based in Pakistan by way of the internet. In the course of their conversations, these individuals had reportedly urged him to

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[3] "Source: Arkansas Shooting Suspect Searched Targeted Sites on Google." *Fox News.com*. June 23, 2009. http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,524833,00.html

[4] Natasha Korecki. "Two Chicago men charged in terror scheme." *Chicago Sun Times*. October 28, 2009

[5] Adam Fresco. "Nicky Reilly, Muslim convert, jailed for 18 years for Exeter bomb attack." *The Times Online*. January 31, 2009. http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/uk/crime/article5619151.ece

attack military rather than civilian targets. Debbie Simpson, the assistant chief constable of Devon and Cornwall, said efforts were being made to trace the Al Qaeda sympathizers. "We are in contact ... with the Pakistani authorities. We believe there is an association," she said. [6]

This cyber-prodding is an important aspect of jihadist internet usage. The same kind of cyber recruiting and prodding on to action occurred in the recent case of five Virginia men who traveled to Pakistan in order to receive training from militant Islamic groups. These men had been first contactedknown as Saifullah, an unknown cyber-recruiter who identified one of the men after he had posted pro-jihadist comments on YouTube.

Saifullah reportedly exchanged emails with the cell member for months, urging him and his colleagues on to Pakistan. Once there, Saifullah reportedly sought to guide the cell, unsuccessfully, to training opportunities with al-Qaida and its affiliate groups.

According to Manuel Torres, a Spanish –based terrorism specialist, "A recruiter does not radicalize a person from scratch.'' [7] Rather, he told the *Washington Post*, They deal with people who are already ready to die.'' Recruiters who are satisfied that they have found a would-be terrorist who is serious, and not a spy, can then make the necessary introductions, the *Post* article explained."What they really serve as are facilitators, intermediaries to the jihadist world,'' Torres was quoted as saying. In other words, the internet plays a contributing role in helping to prime individuals ideologically, toward increasing their susceptibility to being 'pitched.' The internet now also provides the vehicle by which that 'pitch' to action can be made.

A key part of priming the ideological pump within an individual is in continuously barraging someone, or at least providing them with the content by which they can barrage themselves, with ideologically sound propaganda. In February 2009, the Canadians placed Said Namouh, 36, on four terrorism-related charges including conspiracy, participating in a terrorist act, facilitating such an act and committing extortion for a terrorist group.[8] The Canadian government argued that Namouh was a member of the Global Islamic Media Front, an organization involved in propaganda and jihadist recruitment tool. In the course of the trial, RCMP investigator itemized hundreds of files found on Namouh's computer. He was found guilty and is facing up to a life sentence.

Namouh was accused of conspiring with an Austrian man, Mohammed Mahmoud, described as a leader of the Global Islamic Media Front. Mahmoud, an Austrian man of Egyptian origin, has already been sentenced in Austria to four years in prison. His wife was also sentenced to 22-months for her role in the plot. The GIMF, an organization involved in propaganda and jihad

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[6] Ibid.

[7] Griff Witte and Shaiq Hussain. "Pakistan focuses on terrorist recruiter, hoping to expose network." *Washington Post.* December 13, 2009.

[8] Sidhartha Banerjee. "Homegrown Canadian terrorist with jihadist ideals found guilty." *The Canadian Press.*October 1, 2009.

recruitment, is popular with English-language jihadist supporters. The organization has been particularly active in translating Arabic-language al-Qaida propaganda into English and redisseminating it on the pro al-Qaida forums.

The internet seems to have played an important role in the initial self-radicalization of Long Island resident Bryant Neil Vinas, who would go on to allegedly coordinate directly with al-Qaida to attack the Long Island Rail Road. According to reports,

> Mr. Vinas worshiped at a mosque on Long Island, where he worked briefly as a truck driver and in a car wash, according to officials, one of whom said he had been largely "self-radicalized." This official said that Mr. Vinas had met some people at the mosque, the Islamic Association of Long Island, but largely turned toward jihad on the Internet. [9]

Major Nidal Hasan, the only suspect in the November Fort Hood shootings, reportedly used the internet for two purposes. First, according to media reporting, he used email as a way of coordinating with a known pro- al-Qaida cleric, Imam Anwar al-Awlaki. Although the content of these eighteen emails between December 2008 and June 2009 has not been released, open source news reporting provides some sense for the nature of the interaction. ABC News reports that Hasan sought religious advice and wrote, "I can't wait to join you," presumably meaning in the afterlife.[10]

Nidal Hasan also reportedly used the internet to post his own thoughts about suicide operations. In this post, he rejected the distinctions typically made between the heroism of self-sacrifice by a soldier and that of a suicide bomber. [11] There have also been reports that one of Nidal Hasan's closest friends had been an active viewer of al-Qaida and jihadist content on the streaming video site, Youtube. [12]

Hasan's targeting of U.S. military personnel looked markedly similar to a case in the United Kingdom from the previous year. Parviz Khan, a thirty-seven year-old British extremist had planned to kidnap and behead a British soldier was jailed on a life sentence in 2008. Khan was the leader of a Birmingham-based terror cell which, for three years, had been shipping equipment to terrorists in Afghanistan. In 2006 he hatched a plan to kidnap a Muslim soldier serving in

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[9] William K. Rashbaum and Souad Mekhennet. "L.I. Man Helped Qaeda, then Informed." *The New York Times.* July 22, 2009.

[10] Brian Ross and Rhonda Schwartz. "Major Hasan's E-Mail: 'I Can't Wait to Join You' in Afterlife." *The Blotter From Brian Ross.* November 19, 2009. http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/major-hasans-mail-wait-join-afterlife/story?id=9130339

[11] http://www.scribd.com/NidalHasan

[12] Mark Schone, Joseph Rhee, Mary-Rose Abraham and Anna Schecter. "Major Hasan Dined with 'Jihad Hobbyist.'" *The Blotter From Brian Ross.*November 17, 2009 http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/hasans-friend-proclaimed-extremist/story?id=9100187

British forces, video his beheading and broadcast it over the internet. He was caught discussing the plot via an MI5 bug placed in his home. Covert recordings captured Khan bragging about cutting the soldier's head off "like a pig", before burning the body and sending the video to terror leaders based in Pakistan.[13]

The case of Najibullah Zazi, the twenty-four year-old American of Afghan descent, is another example of how jihadist use the internet. Zazi came to the attention of authorities when an email address that was being monitored as part of the abortive Operation Pathway, a bungled British counterterrorism investigation, was suddenly reactivated. Despite that the eleven suspects that had been apprehended on terrorism-related charges earlier in 2009 by British authorities were released, British security staff continued to monitor an email address, which helped them to acquire information pointing their American counterparts to Zazi.

The Afghan is alleged to have been part of a group who used stolen credit cards to buy components for bombs including nail varnish remover. The chemicals bought were similar to those used to make the 2005 London Tube and bus explosives which killed 52 people. Zazi, from Denver, Colorado, is understood to have been given instructions by a senior member of al-Qaida in Pakistan over the internet. US authorities allegedly found bomb-making instructions on his laptop and his fingerprints on batteries and measuring scales they seized. A phone containing footage of New York's Grand Central Station, thought to have been made by him during a visit a week before his arrest, was also found along with explosive residue. Zazi was also said by informants to have attended a terrorist training camp in Pakistan.[14]

Recommendations

In his 10 September 2007 video release, Shaikh Abu Yahya al-Libi offered the United States several unsolicited tips for better prosecuting its 'war of ideas' against al-Qaeda. Although his comments brought al-Qaida propaganda to new heights of arrogance, the fact is that Abu Yahya's recommendations are nothing short of brilliant. Policymakers who are serious about degrading the resonance of the jihadist movement, therefore, would be remiss in ignoring his strategic recommendations simply because of their source.

Abu Yahya's strategic plan for improving America's counter-ideology efforts centers on turning the global al-Qaida movement's own weaknesses against it. He first suggests that governments interested in weakening the ideological appeal of al-Qaeda's message should focus on amplifying the cases of those ex-jihadists (or "backtrackers" as he calls them) who have willingly renounced the use of armed action and recanted their previously held ideological

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[13] Vikram Dodd. "Life sentence for the extremist who plotted to murder soldier." *The Guardian.* February 19, 2008. http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2008/feb/19/uksecurity.ukcrime

[14] "British spies help prevent al Qaeda-inspired attack on New York subway." *Telegraph.* November 9, 2009. http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/northamerica/usa/6529436/British-spies-help-prevent-al-Qaeda-inspired-attack-on-New-York-subway.html

commitments. In short, governments need to show the world that the murder of innocent people is a core part of al-Qaida's ideology.

The most effective way to pursue this strategy, he contends, is to exploit mistakes made by any jihadist group, whether they are al-Qaida or not, by casting that action as being emblematic of the movement itself. Abu Yahya calls this strategy of blurring the differences between al-Qaeda and other Jihadist groups when it serves propaganda purposes, "widening the circle." Pursing this strategy offers the United States significantly more exploitable opportunities for discrediting the actions of the al-Qaida global movement.

Abu Yahya's third strategic point deals with the rise of mainstream Muslim clerics to issue *fatwas* (religious rulings) that incriminate the al-Qaida movement, their ideology and their actions. Abu Yahya shudders at other Muslims' use of "repulsive legal terms, such as bandits, *Khawarij* (literally, "those who seceded," refers to the earliest Islamic sect) and even *Karamathians* or *al-Qaramitah*, ("extreme fanatics") in referring to the jihadists. Abu Yahya is not the first to make these points, however.

The fourth component to Abu Yahya's proposed grand strategy is strengthening and backing Islamic movements far removed from the jihadist trend, particularly those with a democratic approach. Beyond supporting them, he counsels governments to push these mainstream groups into ideological conflict with jihadist groups in order to keep the jihadist scholars and propagandists busy responding to their criticisms. This approach is designed to strip the global al-Qaida movement of its monopoly on the dialogue and instead unleash a "torrential flood of ideas and methodologies which find backing, empowerment, and publicity from numerous parties" against them.

Abu Yahya's recommends aggressively neutralizing or discrediting the guiding thinkers of the global al-Qaida movement. His point is that not all jihadists are replaceable: there are some individuals who provide a disproportionate amount of insight, scholarship or charisma. In order to effectively degrade the jihadist movement's long-term capacity, Abu Yahya suggests that these jihadist luminaries need to be silenced, either through death, imprisonment or perceived irrelevance, thereby leaving the Movement "without an authority in which they can put their full confidence and which directs and guides them, allays their misconceptions, and regulates their march with knowledge, understanding, and wisdom." The consequence of this power vacuum, he argues, is that "those who have not fully matured on this path or who are hostile to them in the first place, to spread whatever ideas and opinions they want and to cause disarray and darkness in the right vision which every Mujahid must have."

Finally, Abu Yahya advises the United States to spin the minor disagreements among leaders or jihadist organizations as being major doctrinal and methodological disputes. He suggests that any disagreement, be it over personal, strategic or theological reasons, can be exacerbated by using them as the basis for designating new subsets, or schools-of-thought. These fractures can also serve as useful inroads on which targeted information operations can be focused: such an environment becomes a "safe-haven for rumormongers, deserters, and demoralizers, and the door

is left wide open for defamation, casting doubts, and making accusations and slanders," he explains.

The United States should not have had to wait for our adversary to hand us a robust grand strategy like this. Abu Yahya made these ideas publically available. All it required was that I took him seriously, read his work and tried to do to al-Qaida what al-Qaida is doing to us: turning our writings and insights about ourselves back against us.

As a nation, we learned the importance of these lessons, of knowing our enemy and leveraging those insights, during the twentieth century. We realized that, although military and intelligence efforts are vital components for keeping adversaries at bay, the root of challenges posed by global ideological movements are inherently ideational in nature. In other words, ideas are at the heart of our adversary's militancy.

Without its underlying ideology and a social-cultural context in which it can flourish, the global al-Qaida could not persist. Unless the United States makes an effort to understand and combat the ideas and the contexts underlying the adversary's militancy, developing a coherent and robust strategy to combat that adversary will be limited to the proverbial "whack-a-mole" successes.

Professor David Engerman, a historian and one of the foremost experts on the intellectual history of Sovietology in the United States, makes a number of compelling points in his recent *Foreign Affairs* article, including noting that,

> Despite the existence of a successful historical model, the U.S. government does not seem to have absorbed the useful lessons from the creation of Soviet studies programs in its efforts to study this new threat. Sovietology was -- especially in its first decade -- a vibrant intellectual enterprise that contributed to scholarly disciplines, public debate, and top-secret government discussions. A look at this field's success is essential to shaping how the U.S. government defines and studies the threat of Islamic fundamentalism.

For Engerman, the United States should be investing significant resources into catalyzing the study of area studies. History, culture and language are the keys to long-term national strategic endurance. Understanding the world, not on a reactionary, threat-by-threat basis, but from a deep global perspective is the preferred approach, and a lesson that was not seemingly learned from the Cold War. "Widening the pipeline," as he calls it, is the key to long-term success. By this he means that the United States government needs to invest resources into opportunities that expand the number and diversity of scholars and researchers thinking, researching and writing about a host of topics.[15] This not only provides knowledge that we will need to know, and often do not realize that we need until we do, but it also builds a wide and deep body of professional expertise over the long-haul. The U.S. needs to invest in up-and-coming scholars doing work on social,

[15] Telephone interview with Professor Engerman. December 15, 2009. For more on this topic see, David C. Engerman. *Know Your Enemy: The Rise and Fall of America's Soviet Experts.* Oxford University Press, 2009.

cultural and historical topics, particularly when it does not seem directly applicable to the operational necessities at-hand.
Indeed, the United States understood after waging its half-century-long conflict with the Soviet Union, that hostile ideas, if left unchallenged, can mobilize populations to action in ways that subverts our national interest. Although not an exact parallel, America's experience combating the spread of global Communism is a useful analog, at least in terms of the importance of ideas. The United States government poured resources into building the academic discipline of Sovietology at universities around the country. Grant programs were established. Cultural, historical and language studies programs were bolstered. Area studies became something that was viewed as part and parcel of national security. The United States recognized that we needed to try to comprehensively understand our adversary, as well as the contexts in which it was, and potentially could be, operating.

Curiously, it has been the Norwegians, not the Americans, who have best understood and embraced the value of deep intellectual engagement with the enemy's ideas today. The Norwegians have established the world's leading program on the study of extremist Islamic movements. Norway's Transnational Radical Islamism Project (TERRA) at its Norwegian Defence Research Establishment provides in-depth academic analyses of contemporary jihadist movements and their ideology, motivations, patterns and types of operations, and the processes of radicalization and recruitment. Shockingly, eight years after 9/11, the United States has no dedicated center, research institute or program that compares in terms of its expertise or capabilities to this Norwegian initiative.

I humbly offer to this subcommittee that we borrow a page out of the jihadist playbook in terms of its use of the internet. The United States needs to establish new vehicles in which scholars and experts *outside* of government can get engaged in this fight by doing what they do best: creative, collaborative academic scholarship. A potential first step would be to establish a vehicle wherein thinkers could virtually (by way of the internet) and openly communicate with one another about both al-Qaida's ideology and media but also the historical social and cultural contexts in which it exists. Such a program should be unclassified and maximize public transparency. It is in such a forum where new ideas can germinate, where new voices can emerge and where the inconsistencies of the enemy's message can be identified – exactly like what the global al-Qaida movement has been doing to us.

Such a conversation should not be seen as 'tipping our hand' but rather as an important step forward in our national commitment to winning this fight. More minds are better than fewer. Open debate is what makes this country strong and what leads us to creative solutions. It is the process of holding this conversation that itself will enhance our own efforts and force the adversary on the defensive in theirs.

Congressional Testimony

UNDERSTANDING CYBERSPACE AS A MEDIUM FOR RADICALIZATION AND COUNTER-RADICALIZATION

Christopher Boucek
Associate, Middle East Program
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Written Testimony
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Armed Services
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Unconventional Threats and Capabilities
December 16, 2009

CARNEGIE ENDOWMENT
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The prominent role of the internet in propagating and perpetuating violent Islamist ideology is well known. The speed, anonymity and connectivity of the web have contributed to its emergence as a powerful source of knowledge and inspiration; it is an unrivaled medium to facilitate propaganda, fundraising and recruitment efforts. The vast scope of information available, coupled with the absence of national boundaries, facilitates ideological cohesion and camaraderie between disparate and geographically separated networks.[1] A broad spectrum of individuals turn to the internet to seek spiritual knowledge, search for Islamist perspectives and attempt to participate in the global jihad. As such, identifying methods to short-circuit internet radicalization has become an urgent goal for numerous governments.

In recent years, Saudi Arabia has quietly supported initiatives to combat internet radicalization. One of the most developed programs is the Sakinah Campaign, which began several years ago to fight online radicalization and recruitment. Named after the Arabic word for religiously inspired tranquility, the Sakinah Campaign operates as an independent, non-governmental organization, supported by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs. Similar to other counter-radicalization and demobilization strategies in the kingdom, the Sakinah Campaign uses Islamic scholars to interact online with individuals looking for religious knowledge, with the aim of steering them away from extremist sources.

The Internet in Saudi Arabia

Internet access first arrived in Saudi Arabia in January 1999.[2] In 2000, there were an estimated 500,000 internet users in the kingdom; by the following year those numbers doubled. They doubled again in 2004 to 2.325 million users, and by 2007 the number of users increased to an estimated 4.7 million.[3] Internet access in the kingdom is routed through the King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST), which is also home to a sophisticated national internet filtering and monitoring system, located in Riyadh. At KACST, the Internet Services Unit is responsible for administering web filtering, based upon the directives of a security committee led by the Ministry of Interior. By far, the vast majority of blocked sites relate to illicit, illegal, or immoral content, including sites featuring pornography, gambling and drug and alcohol use.[4] Security officials estimate that less than five percent of blocked sites relate to terrorism and extremism.

According to Saudi officials, extremist websites have multiplied in recent years, from only 15 sites in 1998 to more than several thousand today.[5] Sites often appear faster than they can be identified and blocked. The introduction of the internet in Saudi Arabia greatly expanded the

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[1] Hanna Rogan, *Jihadism Online: A Study of How al-Qaida and Radical Islamist Groups Use the Internet for Terrorist Purposes* (Kjeller: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment, 2006), p. 8.

[2] While the internet has been available since 1994, it was restricted to official institutional users; in 1999, local service providers were permitted. See Human Rights Watch, "The Internet in the Middle East and North Africa: Free Expression and Censorship," July 1999.

[3] Internet usage data is based on personal interviews in Riyadh in May and June 2008 and on official Saudi government figures available at www.internet.gov.sa.

[4] Based on Saudi Ministry of Interior data, it is estimated that approximately 35% of all websites are blocked in Saudi Arabia.

[5] This data is based in part on personal discussions with Ministry of Interior officials. At the Information Technology and National Security conference organized by Saudi intelligence in December 2007, it was stated that there are 17,000 sites that "fuel al-Qaeda ideology." See Raid Qusti, "Experts Recommend Special Laws to Combat Terror," *Arab News*, December 5, 2007.

distribution of jihadist literature and propaganda in the kingdom, a development which set the stage for the onset of the violent al-Qaeda campaign in 2003.[6] Saudi authorities assert that many extremist sites are hosted by servers located overseas in such locations as Europe, the United States, China and Southeast Asia. Moreover, they add that obtaining cooperation to shut them down is extremely difficult.[7] It should be noted that many of these Internet Service Providers are often unaware of either their clients or the content of their clients' sites; some data is hidden clandestinely on unrelated sites, further complicating matters.[8]

Extremist Use of Internet in Saudi Arabia

Before the recent counter-terrorism crackdown, extremist materials were often obtained from bookstores and record shops. Saudi authorities now monitor these outlets closely. As a result, many texts, videos and audio recordings were uploaded to the internet. This contributed to the establishment of the internet as both a source of information and inspiration. Despite the publication of many jihadist journals focused on strategy and tactics, such as *Mu'askar al-Battar*, one of the internet's greatest strengths arises not from providing training guidance, but as a source of inspiration. Despite popular analysis, "the internet does not function as a 'virtual training camp' organized from above, but rather as a resource bank maintained and accessed largely by self-radicalized sympathizers."[9]

The introduction of more comprehensive security measures has driven many dedicated extremists to avoid the internet and other potentially compromising technologies altogether. Dedicated militants in the kingdom now often avoid using the internet to transmit sensitive information, and instead meet in person to exchange data on CDs and increasingly on USB flash drives.[10] While some sources have cited the internet's role in recruitment, it is believed that few hardcore jihadists are recruited online. Much of the face-to-face recruitment is now allegedly conducted in coffee shops and clubs, avoiding conspicuous locations such as mosques.[11]

Sakinah Campaign[12]

The Sakinah Campaign is an independent, non-governmental organization that was created to engage in dialogue online as a way to combat internet radicalization. It targets individuals who use the internet to seek out religious knowledge, and aims to prevent them from accepting extremist beliefs. It seeks to refute so-called deviant interpretations of Islam and rebut extremist arguments, including the ideology of *takfir*.[13] While the campaign is

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[6] Thomas Hegghammer, "Islamist Violence and Regime Stability in Saudi Arabia," *International Affairs* 84:4 (2008): p. 707.

[7] Some reluctance comes from the desire of authorities in other countries to keep a particular site open so that they can monitor user traffic.

[8] Hanna Rogan and Anne Stenersen, "Jihadism Online: Al-Qaida's Use of the Internet," *FFI Focus*, May 2008, p. 7; Abdel Bari Atwan, *The Secret History of al Qaeda* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006).

[9] Rogan and Stenersen, "Jihadism Online: Al-Qaida's Use of the Internet."

[10] Personal interviews, Ministry of Interior officials, Riyadh, March 2007.

[11] Huda al-Saleh, "Saudi Arabia: Internet Most Popular Terrorist Recruitment Method-Official," *Asharq Alawsat*, May 2, 2007.

[12] Data in this section is based on personal interviews with Shaykh Majid al-Mursal, Ph.D., head of the Islamic science section at the Sakinah Campaign, and Umar Issa, Sakinah worker, Riyadh, November 2007.

[13] Pronouncement that someone is an unbeliever, see *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003).

supported and encouraged in its work by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Ministry of Education, and Ministry of Interior, it is officially a non-governmental project. There are in fact other governmental internet-based efforts to combat internet radicalization, although many of these programs are kept from public view in order to be effective. The independence of the Sakinah Campaign helps contribute to its relative legitimacy and results in more people being willing to work with them in their efforts to combat extremism online.

The Sakinah Campaign is the combination of what were originally two separate programs. One program was designed to collect, catalogue and analyze extremist material found online. This effort resulted in the creation of a large database of books, pamphlets and magazines, as well as a number of video and audio recordings. Not all of the materials included in the collection were available in the public domain. Some documents, such as letters and other private communications, were collected for the insights they offered into the thinking within the movement. The database featured materials used to justify and support the ideology of extremism, as well as the reactions of others to this material. Political events and important dates were also assessed for their importance to the extremist community. All of this material was being collected—and still is by campaign workers—to document and better understand the thinking of extremists and terrorists. According to the campaign, such information is critical to its success. They must be able to speak in a language that those familiar with the material will understand and accept. This effort was joined with another program that focused on using the internet to dialogue with those who have questions about Islam. Together they form what is known today as the Sakinah Campaign.

As of November 2007, there were approximately 45 people formally working with the Sakinah Campaign, including a separate women's section comprised of 10 volunteer workers.[14] Of this total, approximately 15 workers focus on online discussion, while a separate 15 surf the internet to collect the documentary materials. The Sakinah workers who dialogue online are *ulama*[15] and other religious scholars proficient with modern computer technology, all with highly developed understandings of extremist ideologies, including the religious interpretations used to justify violence and terrorism. Also working with the campaign are some volunteers who have renounced their former extremist beliefs. While currently only a few such volunteers work with the campaign, according to Sakinah workers it is hoped that eventually others will join their efforts. Most of these individuals were not hardcore extremists, but rather people with questions about what was permissible in Islam and eager to have their questions answered by knowledgeable scholars. This demonstrates in part the potential of the program to expand. Workers also acknowledge, however, that some individuals will never work with the Sakinah Campaign.[16]

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[14] Ibid. For more on the organization of the campaign, see Abdullah F. Ansary, "Combating Extremism: A Brief Overview of Saudi Arabia's Approach," *Middle East Policy* 15:2 (2008): p. 121.

[15] Educated religious scholars, see *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003).

[16] The campaign has been attacked by extremists, and those involved have been accused of "betraying the Sunnis and of [being involved in] deception and greed." See OSC, "Jihadist Forum Participant Criticizes Saudi 'al-Sakinah' Youth Initiative," February 29, 2008. See also Ansary, "Combating Extremism: A Brief Overview of Saudi Arabia's Approach," p. 123.

Sakinah in Practice

Once online, after initially chatting with an individual, a Sakinah worker will usually suggest that they move into a private chat room.[17] Although some individuals have no problems dialoguing in public, others prefer to initially engage in private. These online conversations take place in both real time and in the form of a series of back-and-forth posts. In the latter case, typically the person with whom they are chatting will post a question, and then the Sakinah worker will respond. These chats can take place over the span of a few hours, but they have also been known to continue for months. The transcript of the dialogue is then posted online for others to read, multiplying the program's reach.[18]

In addition to collecting and cataloguing material and engaging in dialogue, another aspect of the campaign involves infiltrating known extremist and al-Qaeda-affiliated or inspired websites. This is done to both collect new information, as well as to sow dissent within the websites and internet forums used by extremists.

Similar to how the country's counseling program seeks to help detainees abandon extremist beliefs through face-to-face discussions, the Sakinah Campaign works to erode the intellectual support for extremism online. By entering chat rooms and engaging people in discussions about their beliefs, the Sakinah Campaign strives to demonstrate fallacies and help internet surfers renounce "corrupted" understandings of Islam.

Sakinah Web Launch

In October 2006, the campaign announced the creation of its website to complement its other activities.[19] According to reports at the time, the website was intended to serve the global online Muslim community with both Arabic and English sections. To date, however, much of the material is available only in Arabic. Plans called for the site to develop into a clearinghouse for information about extremism, radicalization and counter-radicalization and to serve as a central location for people to turn to online with questions about Islam. Khalid al-Mushawwah, one of the campaign's founders, stated at the website's launch that the intention was not to target extremists, but rather those individuals using the internet to learn more about Islam.[20] It was also planned that the site would serve as a learning resource for imams, shaykhs, and other *da'wa*[21] activists. Their education in current trends in extremist thinking was perceived by the site's organizers as an essential step in the effort to combat internet radicalization.

The site serves as a repository for a wide range of material, including a large number of studies and reports focusing on the work of the campaign, information about other initiatives combating extremism, numerous audio and video files (including clips of extremist recantations), as well as media coverage of the Sakinah Campaign's efforts. Other sections of

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[17] Personal interviews, Shaykh Majid al-Mursal and Umar Issa, November 2007, and Dr. Abdulrahman al-Hadlaq, Riyadh, March 2007 and May 2008.

[18] For an example transcript, see Y. Yehoshua, "Reeducation of Extremists in Saudi Arabia," Middle East Media Research Institute, January 18, 2006.

[19] The campaign's website can be accessed at www.asskeenh.com.

[20] *Ar-Riyad*, October 8, 2006.

[21] Religious call to faith, see *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003).

the site are focused solely on *fatawa*[22] issued by leading clerics on a number of relevant topics. There will also be a section devoted to interviews with individuals who have renounced violence and extremism. Most important, the website will host the transcripts from the campaign's online dialogues so that others can read them and thereby spread the campaign's efforts.

Criminalization and Other Recent Efforts

A new information security law enacted by Saudi Arabia in 2008 established severe penalties for anyone involved in spreading extremist or radical material online. Those found who have created a terrorist website, or who have used the internet to communicate with terrorist leaders, raise funds, spread extremism, or distribute tactical information useful for terrorists will be subject to a maximum of 10 years in prison and/or a fine of up to five million Saudi riyals (SAR), approximately $1.3 million. This is ten times the punishment for other non-terrorism related internet offenses; crimes such as hacking are punishable by a one year sentence and a 500,000 SAR fine.

Other recent steps have been taken to curb the issuance of unsanctioned *fatawa*. Presently, only clerics associated with the state-sponsored Council of Senior Islamic Scholars may issue *fatawa*.[23] Moreover, in October 2007 the General Presidency of Scholarly Research and Ifta[24] created an official *fatawa* website to serve as the only source online for legitimate and authentic—and importantly, legal—*fatawa*.[25] These were both important steps to codify the process of issuing religious rulings and combat the spread of extremist *fatawa*, such as those advocating participation in unsanctioned jihad. It will remain to be seen whether such steps will have the desired impact of preventing the spread of independent and "unauthorized" religious opinions.

Conclusion

The popularity of the internet and its central role in spreading violent Islamist ideologies has led to international interest in Saudi Arabia's Sakinah Campaign. One of the program's greatest assets is its ability to interact with people not only residing in the kingdom; Sakinah workers, for example, interact with an increasing number of non-Saudis. Since word of the campaign has spread, it has been approached by several other countries asking for assistance in creating similar programs to combat internet radicalization. The United Arab Emirates and Kuwait both have sought to work with the Saudis to create national versions of the Sakinah Campaign. A number of other nations—including Algeria, the United Kingdom and the United States—have also expressed interest in creating web-based counter-radicalization platforms.

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[22] Legal opinion, see *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003).

[23] For more information, see Nawaf Obaid and Anthony Cordesman, "Saudi Militants in Iraq: Assessment and Kingdom's Response," Center for Strategic and International Studies, September 19, 2005, p. 15.

[24] Act of issuing a fatwa, see *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (2003).

[25] Available at www.alifta.com. See also Habib Shaikh, "Fatwas Will Be Made Available on Internet," *Khaleej Times*, November 2, 2007; Andrew Hammond, "'Fatwas' on Rise but Believers Don't Always Listen," Reuters, December 10, 2007.

The importance of the internet will only increase in the future, and programs such as the Sakinah Campaign are similarly bound to multiply. Any strategy to combat the spread of extremism must also offer viable options for the religiously observant. That is, in addition to taking a way a negative, there must also be ways for the individuals to positively exercise their faith. Engaging with that segment of the population and offering alternatives to violent extremism is a critical necessity in the war of ideas. Encouraging local partners to take up this approach is vital, and the Saudi experience will be useful for others to study as they consider strategies to curb internet radicalization.

DISCLOSURE FORM FOR WITNESSES
CONCERNING FEDERAL CONTRACT AND GRANT INFORMATION

INSTRUCTION TO WITNESSES: Rule 11, clause 2(g)(4), of the Rules of the U.S. House of Representatives for the 111th Congress requires nongovernmental witnesses appearing before House committees to include in their written statements a curriculum vitae and a disclosure of the amount and source of any federal contracts or grants (including subcontracts and subgrants) received during the current and two previous fiscal years either by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness.

Witness name: Dr. Christopher Boucek

Capacity in which appearing: (check one)

_X_Individual

___Representative

If appearing in a representative capacity, name of the company, association or other entity being represented:_____

FISCAL YEAR 2010

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2009

federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant

FISCAL YEAR 2008

Federal grant(s) / contracts	federal agency	dollar value	subject(s) of contract or grant
American Institute of Yemeni Studies (deferred indefinitely)	Dept of State	$5,000	Research in Yemen

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MEMBERS POST HEARING

DECEMBER 16, 2009

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY MR. SMITH

Mr. SMITH. How do development activities support disengagement and de-radicalization?

Dr. BRACHMAN. Development efforts are an important, albeit not solely sufficient, way to help mitigate the motivating factors that tend push individuals toward extremist ideologies. The problem is that there is no single trajectory or profile for the kind of people who are drawn to violent extremism so, therefore, identifying specific causes can be difficult. Many of the individuals who have been implicated in plots or attacks within the West in recent years have seemingly been motivated out of a cocktail of personal frustration, extreme religio-political-social beliefs, concern for a population that they perceive to be oppressed, a desire for individual glory and a willingness to use violence. Development activities can certainly help to reduce the potential pool of individuals primed to move down the road of radicalization but must be combined with a host of other programs addressing other facets of this problem in a synchronized way.

Mr. SMITH. What are the legal constraints that limit U.S. agencies' ability to monitor the use of the internet and other media in radicalization efforts and ability to implement counter-radicalization strategies?

Dr. BRACHMAN. Unfortunately, I am not qualified to answer that question.

Mr. SMITH. What lessons might we draw from the ideological struggle with Communism during the Cold War that could inform the current struggle with al Qaeda? What lessons can be carried over to this conflict, and which ones are not applicable based on changed international circumstances?

Dr. BRACHMAN. During the Cold War, the United States government poured resources into building the academic discipline of Sovietology at universities around the country. Grant programs were established. Cultural, historical and language studies programs were bolstered. Area studies became something that was viewed as part and parcel of national security. The United States recognized that we needed to try to comprehensively understand our adversary, as well as the contexts in which it was, and potentially could be, operating. After an initial surge of resources and interest from policymakers after the 9/11 attacks, there has been little sustained attempt to support a broad-based initiative on par with efforts during the Cold War in order to better understand the complexities, factions, personalities, concepts, language and other dimensions of violent extremist Jihadi-Salafi thought.

Mr. SMITH. What do you believe are the effective tools (organizations, programs, etc.) in the U.S. government toolbox in countering extremist ideologies? Where should the center of gravity be for implementing a counter-radicalization strategy based on al-Libi's "unsolicited tips"?

Dr. BRACHMAN. The goal must be to first clearly identify the strategic goal and then develop programs and initiatives that help the United States and its partners achieve that goal. In the case of the global al-Qaida movement, the United States has a number of interwoven interests and objectives. In terms of combating the al-Qaida ideology that underlies much of the violence and attempted violence that has been seen over the past decade, there are certain types of attributes that specific programs must have in order to be successful. They must degrade the resonance of al-Qaida's ideology and goals. They must bolster the credence and legitimacy of America's ideology and goals. These messages must be communicated in a way that 1) recognizes that it will have global reach; 2) adopts a consistent media strategy that focuses on the needs of strategic cultures rather than policy outcomes (Corman, et al., 2008). Programs that allow America to message in a way that is perceived as honest, candid and direct about its interests (that are not subverted by policy actions on the ground that stand in contradistinction to those messages) will have a greater likelihood of not being dismissed by target audiences. The center of gravity of Abu Yahya's points is that al-Qaida is its own worst nightmare. Neither the organization nor the ideology can stand as it offers nothing substantive for its follower

to grab on to other than empty revolutionary rhetoric. By exposing the gulf between al-Qaida's rhetoric and action while minimizing America's gap, the United States will make progress in its effort to shore up its global credibility while degrading the resonance of the global al-Qaida movement.

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