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MARCH 17, 2010
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUB-COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE, INFORMATION SHARING
AND TERRORISM RISK ASSESSMENT**

WORKING WITH COMMUNITIES TO DISRUPT TERROR PLOTS

On September 13, 2001, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, fearing a backlash against Muslim-Americans, convened a meeting led by then Governor Gray Davis and Mayor James Hahn, Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky and I, in addition to the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department's Interfaith Council.

Our core message was to not involve religious assumptions regarding the attacks on America during 9-11. We succeeded in keeping 11,000,000 people intact without violence. Minor verbal abuse acts, however, were documented by deputies and police.

Since then, the Sheriff's Department has worked daily with diverse Muslim-American communities in Los Angeles County. This testimony of our efforts is a model that could be helpful as our nation continues to prevent future terrorism at home and abroad.

Local and international relationships are the strongest tools in the war against terror. Information that is relationship-derived is more reliable than information twice or more removed from the original source. When the Christmas day terrorist Abdulmutallab's father reported his son's extremism, intelligence doesn't get any better than this. Where the billions of people of the world are aligned in cooperation with police against terrorism, the terrorists will be defeated

Because we need relationships with Muslim communities to better protect all citizens, Americans, particularly elected officials, should not claim Islam supports terrorism. This is counter-productive to trust. It plays into the terrorist strategy that the west is against Islam. Moreover, the millions of Iranians who are objecting to the apparent fraudulent election in Iran, and the undemocratic behavior of its supreme religious leader(s), are not abandoning Islam as they embrace fair democracy for their country.

Law enforcement alone, however, cannot generate the appropriate intelligence and response to terrorist cells without the cooperation and support of all citizens, especially the Muslim-American community. Moreover, in America, we are obligated to protect all citizens and their respective religions. To effectively detect and manage extremists, police need to have the trust and understanding of Muslim communities who live within and outside the United States, especially those who have experienced terrorist attacks within their homelands. Simply, police need public participation. To accomplish public participation, certain strategies, such as public-trust policing, need to be in place everywhere in our nation.

PUBLIC-TRUST POLICING

To maintain a safe society free of terrorist attacks, police need to establish public-trust policing techniques that lead to appropriate channels of communication and participation with the public. Los Angeles County has aggressively embarked upon a public-trust policing program since 9-11. Relationships with all faiths are important to achieve interfaith harmony. Los Angeles County has many interfaith efforts. The Sheriff's Department developed an Interfaith Advisory Council consisting of more than 300 Rabbis, Priests, Imams, Ministers, Monks and faith leaders of all religions. In addition, the Sheriff's Department also developed a Muslim Community Affairs unit, the first of its kind in the nation, staffed by Muslim-American deputy sheriffs.

Moreover, the Sheriff's Department has ethnic advisory councils that are European, South Asian, Asian, Middle Eastern, Russian, and particularly Iranian and Muslims from various nations including Pakistan, Jordan, the Gulf States, Turkey and Azerbaijan.

MUSLIM-AMERICANS ARE CLEARLY AGAINST TERRORISM

To further the effort of public safety, Muslim-American leaders within Los Angeles County formed a non-profit organization, the Muslim-American Homeland Security Congress (MAHSC). Islamic organizations that contributed to this effort are the Islamic Shura Council which is an umbrella organization covering 70 mosques within Southern California; the Council of American-Islamic Relations (CAIR); the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC); the Council of Pakistan-American Affairs (COPAA); Iranian-American Muslim Association of North America (IMAN); and various local mosques and Islamic centers.

The MAHSC organization works closely with the Muslim Community Affairs Unit which consists of Arabic-speaking deputy sheriffs and key leaders of the Sheriff's Department. Together, we engage in community forums and participate in events to discuss their concerns with law enforcement. Some of the other functions of the Muslim Community Affairs unit include attending community events and functions, conduct facility tours to familiarize them with the Sheriff's Department functions, and train Sheriff's Department staff on cultural diversity issues relating to the Muslim American population.

PROFESSIONAL INTERNATIONAL POLICE DIPLOMACY

Los Angeles County Police agencies are building strong relationships with the police of Muslim, European, Asian, Central American and Canadian countries.

One major reality in the fight against terrorism is that Muslim communities are in the best position to discover extremist activities within the United States, as well as all countries where Muslims reside, worldwide. The trust-based relationships police develop with their respective communities will more often than not lead to the early detection of extremism.

To further validate the strategy of international public police co-dependence, the Sheriff's Department has embarked upon international police diplomacy efforts. The countries of focus, to date, are Pakistan, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Israel, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, all Gulf States, Mexico, all Central American states, China, Taiwan, South Korea, France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Russia, The Netherlands, Canada, Morocco, Singapore, Armenia and Great Britain.

Simply, Los Angeles County, like the City of New York, is a capitol of all the world's nationalities by heritage or birth. This resource of humanity is an asset in discovering extremist behavior.

INTERFAITH RESPECT

Americans of faith will help when asked. The question of peaceful human co-existence, worldwide, cannot be fully answered without including the goodwill of all faiths to one another. At this time in our history, with billions of dollars being spent on a war against terror, our nation should ask that all Americans follow President Obama's example and be the instrument of goodwill to Muslims throughout the world.

It is my belief that the average American has the potential to be our best ambassador of goodwill. However, senators, members of congress, governors, mayors, boards of supervisors, sheriffs, police chiefs, scholars, scientists, and laborers and their leaders must set the example with a desire to visit mosques and communicate with Muslims, worldwide, in the quest of better understanding Islam. Extremists are what they are, but they cannot thrive or survive in a world that is not indifferent.

Los Angeles County is not indifferent to the assets and virtues of the Muslim communities, locally and worldwide.

HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (HSAC)

As a member of the Homeland Security Advisory Council, I would like to commend Department of Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano on her initiative on countering violent extremism. I dedicate myself and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department to work with DHS to develop a program similar to that of the Sheriff Department's Muslim community outreach program on a national level.