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**Anti-Defamation League
Foundation**

President
Milton S. Schneider



October 28, 2015

The Honorable Ron DeSantis
Chairman
House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch
Ranking Member
House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman DeSantis and Ranking Member Lynch,

As the House Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security holds hearings on "Radicalization: Social Media and the Rise of Terrorism," we write to provide the views of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and ask that this statement be included as part of the official hearings record.

The Anti-Defamation League

The Anti-Defamation League is the foremost non-governmental authority on domestic terrorism, extremism, organized hate groups, and hate crimes. In the United States, adherents of a variety of extremist movements – from white supremacists to Islamic extremists – perceive Jews as their enemy and target the Jewish community with both propaganda and violence. Extremists also target other communities or minorities, as well as the democratic foundations of government that protect everybody's rights.

Through its Center on Extremism, whose experts monitor a variety of extremist and terrorist movements, ADL plays a leading role in exposing extremist movements and activities, while helping communities and government agencies alike in combatting them. The League also provides the public with extensive resources, such as its analytic reports on extremist trends and its Hate Symbols¹ and Terror Symbols databases, which have generated more than 10.5 million views.

Assisting Law Enforcement

ADL is the largest non-governmental provider in the United States for law enforcement training on hate crimes, extremism, and terrorism. Each year, ADL experts deliver customized, in-depth training on these subjects to over 10,000 federal, state, and local law enforcement officers. ADL arms law enforcement with the information it needs to respond to those extremists who cross the line from espousing hateful ideologies to committing violent or criminal acts, thus protecting the Jewish community and all Americans.

¹ <http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/hate-on-display/#.VVtmlvVhHw>

Imagine a World Without Hate®

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Involvement in Countering Violent Extremism

ADL professionals were directly involved in the February, 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism. Convened by President Obama, the three-day program involved experts from around the world working to develop an action plan to address violent domestic and international extremism. Oren Segal, Director of ADL's Center on Extremism, provided insight into the nature of violent extremist movements in the U.S., as well as how Americans of all religions, races, and backgrounds are being recruited by international terrorist organizations online.

The Summit also provided a showcase for pilot programs in three cities, which have developed collaborative networks of government and non-governmental stakeholders. ADL is a partner in the Boston area pilot program, which developed a framework for prevention and intervention strategies in the wake of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombing. Under the leadership of Carmen Ortiz, United States Attorney for Massachusetts, the collaborative has been meeting since the fall of 2014. The Framework developed by the Boston collaborative, including the League's New England Regional Director, Robert Trestan, takes a multi-disciplinary and community-wide approach to addressing the threat posed by violent extremists.

In advance of the White House Summit, ADL issued an online report titled "Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2014: The Rise of ISIS & Sustained Online Recruitment,"² which includes the League's research and detailed analysis on homegrown violent extremism motivated by radical interpretations of Islam in 2014 and the influence of ISIS and its use of social media for recruitment purposes.

Terrorist Exploitation of Social Media

As Internet proficiency and the use of social media grow ever-more universal, so too do the efforts of terrorist groups to exploit new technology in order to make materials that justify and sanction violence more accessible and impactful.

Terrorist groups are not only using various online and mobile platforms to spread their messages, but also to actively recruit adherents who live in the communities they seek to target.

While the fundamental ideological content of terrorist propaganda has remained consistent for two decades – replete with militant condemnations of perceived transgressions against Muslims worldwide, appeals for violence and anti-Semitism – terrorist groups are now able to reach, recruit and motivate extremists more quickly and effectively than ever before by adapting their messages to new technology.

In the past, plots were directed by foreign terrorist organizations or their affiliates and recruitment and planning generally required some direct, face-to-face interaction with terrorist operatives. Indoctrination came directly from extremist peers, teachers or clerics. Individuals would then advance through the radicalization process through constant interaction with likeminded sympathizers or, as the 2007 New York Police Department (NYPD) report on radicalization described, with a "spiritual sanctioner" who gave credence to those beliefs.

Today, individuals can find analogous social networks, inspiration and encouragement online, packaged neatly together with bomb-making instructions. This enables adherents to self-radicalize without face-to-face contact with an established terrorist group or cell.

Individual extremists, or lone wolves, are also increasingly self-radicalizing online with no physical interactions with established terrorist groups or cells – a development that can make it more difficult for law enforcement to detect plots in their earliest stages.

² <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/homegrown-islamic-extremism-in-2014-the-rise-of-isis-and-sustained-online-recruitment.pdf>

The overwhelming majority of American citizens and residents linked to terrorist activity motivated by Islamic extremism in the past several years – including at least 63 U.S. residents in 2015 – actively used the Internet to access propaganda or otherwise facilitate their extremist activity.

The Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) has been particularly aggressive in pursuing multiple sophisticated online recruiting and propaganda efforts. ISIS's far-reaching propaganda machine has not only attracted thousands of recruits, but has also helped Syria and Iraq emerge as the destinations of choice for this generation of extremists.

ISIS's online presence is worldwide, and presented in multiple languages, as is the propaganda it distributes. The terror group regularly releases magazines in Arabic, English, and French, and it has also released propaganda statements and videos in other languages, including Hebrew, Spanish, Turkish, Russian, Kurdish, and German.

Official ISIS accounts are augmented by supporters, some of whom seem to have quasi-official status. These supporters both share official propaganda and contribute to the barrage of online voices supporting terrorist ideology. Some supporters add personal details about their experiences in the group – information that adds to the authenticity of their narratives by providing concrete experiences.

ISIS supporters also use these sites to publish links to downloadable propaganda materials, instructions for traveling to Syria and Iraq, manifestos encouraging lone wolf attacks and much more.

Social media platforms that enable users to conceal their identities tend to be more heavily exploited by ISIS. And while many social media platforms regularly disable terrorist accounts, new ones can almost always be immediately established.

Furthermore, some platforms do not have clear or effective policies regarding terrorist content, enabling terrorists and their supporters to exploit their services more easily and uninterrupted.

For example, WordPress hosts a website that features hundreds of ISIS propaganda videos, statements and publications. Among the hundreds of items on the site are beheading and execution videos, as well as videos and articles encouraging Westerners to travel to join ISIS or to commit attacks on its behalf in their home countries. The site remains online despite efforts to flag the material.

The increase in small arms attacks in both the U.S. and abroad serve as a testimony to the potential power of social media. Spurred at least in part by extortions by ISIS propaganda on social media to undertake attacks by any means possible, including with knives, the U.S. has seen a disturbing increase in small arms attacks. These have been directed at law enforcement in particular, but pose a more general threat as well.

David Wright and Nicholas Rovinski, who were arrested in June, allegedly plotted to behead local law enforcement. Their alleged co-conspirator, Usaama Rahim, was killed in a confrontation with law enforcement in June when he threatened officers with a knife. In addition, Fareed Mumuni and Munther Omar Saleh of New York allegedly used knives in confrontations with law enforcement officials. A fourth individual, Amir Said Abdul Rahman Al-Ghazi, had also purchased a knife but did not use it. He had allegedly bought it for use in propaganda videos that he wanted to film.

A similar, but more widespread phenomenon is ongoing in Israel. Instructional videos on stabbing,³ clips of Muslim preachers calling for attacks on Jews, images and hashtags, are all going viral. Such incitement on social media is widely understood as having a significant link to the stabbing attacks against Israelis, and the online approbation of each attack further spreads the message and encourages would-be attackers.

³ <http://blog.adl.org/international/instructional-content-on-how-to-stab-jews-spreads-on-social-media>

Anti-Semitism: A Pillar of Islamic Extremist Ideology

As new technology and social media continue to alter the nature of global communications, terrorist groups have quickly adapted to these tools in their efforts to reach an ever-widening pool of potential adherents. As a result, anti-Semitism in its most dangerous form is easily accessible by a worldwide audience.

In a video message in August 2015, Osama bin Laden's son, Hamza bin Laden, utilized a range of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel narratives in his effort to rally Al Qaeda supporters and incite violence against Americans and Jews.

Bin Laden described Jews and Israel as having a disproportionate role in world events and the oppression of Muslims. He compared the "Zio-Crusader alliance led by America" to a bird: "Its head is America, one wing is NATO and the other is the State of the Jews in occupied Palestine, and the legs are the tyrant rulers that sit on the chests of the peoples of the Muslim Ummah [global community]."

Bin Laden then called for attacks worldwide and demanded that Muslims "support their brothers in Palestine by fighting the Jews and the Americans... not in America and occupied Palestine and Afghanistan alone, but all over the world.... take it to all the American, Jewish, and Western interests in the world."

While such violent expressions of anti-Semitism have been at the core of Al Qaeda's ideology for decades, terrorist groups motivated by Islamic extremist ideology, from Al Qaeda to ISIS, continue to rely on depictions of a Jewish enemy – often combined with violent opposition to the State of Israel – to recruit followers, motivate adherents and draw attention to their cause. Anti-Israel sentiment is not the same as anti-Semitism. However, terrorist groups often link the two, exploiting hatred of Israel to further encourage attacks against Jews worldwide and as an additional means of diverting attention to their cause.

And they have more tools at their disposal than ever before.

Recent terrorist attacks against Jewish institutions in Europe, and the spike in incitement materials encouraging stabbing and other attacks against Jews and Israelis around the world, not only speak to the global reach provided by these new technologies, but also to the pervasive nature of anti-Semitism in terrorist propaganda that encourages violence directed at Jews.

In September, ADL issued a report⁴ examining the nature and function of anti-Semitism in terrorist propaganda today. It focused on ISIS, Al Qaeda Central, and two of Al Qaeda's largest affiliates, Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen and Al Shabaab in Somalia, as well as the prevalence of anti-Semitism among supporters of Palestinian terrorist organizations. It also provides examples of individuals linked to terrorist plots and other activity in the U.S. that were influenced, at least to some degree, by anti-Semitic and anti-Israel messages.

Encouraging Attacks

The following is a small sampling of calls for homegrown attacks in the U.S by foreign terrorist organizations since 2014:

- **October 2015:** ISIS released a trailer for an upcoming video titled "We Will Burn America" that shows imagery of the White House exploding.
- **September 2015:** AQAP released the 14th issue of its English-language propaganda vehicle, *Inspire* magazine, which called for lone-wolf attacks against the U.S.

⁴ <http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/Anti-Semitism-A-Pillar-of-Islamic-Extremist-Ideology.pdf>

- **August 2015:** AQAP released a video praising terror attacks in Western countries and calling for additional attacks against the U.S. Quotes included, "Oh *Mujahideen* (fighters) in every corner of the world, I urge you on America... direct your spears towards them," and, "And to the warriors of Lone Jihad, may Allah bless and guide your efforts.... Set your goals with precision and focus your strikes on the enemy's joints. And after seeking help from Allah, seek guidance and instruction from *Inspire Magazine*."
- **May 2015:** ISIS supporters called for attacks against the Draw Mohamed contest set to take place in Garland, Texas. These calls were acted upon by Elton Simpson and Nadir Soofi.
- **April 2015:** A video released by ISIS in German with English subtitles encouraged lone-wolf attacks against Western countries, including the U.S. The video showed individuals preparing for different types of attacks, including a stabbing, a car bomb, and a suicide bombing in Times Square, as well as learning about gun use and bomb-making online. Videos showing how individuals could learn about perpetrating attacks online provided an apparent example for would-be domestic attackers and acknowledged the importance of online terrorist propaganda.
- **April 2015:** A video released by ISIS titled "We Will Burn America" featured footage and praise of the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center along with narration in Arabic with English subtitles stating, "September 11 will be repeated." It also featured images from the attack on the Paris kosher supermarket and shootings in Canada, both of which were undertaken by individuals acting in ISIS's name, as well as images of beheadings by ISIS.
- **February 2015:** Al Shabaab released a video documenting its 2013 attack against the Westgate Mall in Kenya and calling on its supporters to undertake similar attacks against "American and Jewish-owned shopping centers around the world."
- **December 2014:** The sixth issue of ISIS's English-language magazine *Dabiq* praised individual attacks on various Western countries including the U.S., Canada, Australia and France, stating, "There will be others who follow the examples set by Man Haron Monis and Numan Haider in Australia, Martin Couture-Rouleau and Michael Zehaf-Bibeau in Canada, Zale Thompson in America, and Bertrand Nzohabonayo in France, and all that the West will be able to do is to anxiously await the next round of slaughter."
- **December 2014:** The thirteenth issue of AQAP's *Inspire* magazine called for attacks on American, French and British airlines and assassinations of prominent Western financial leaders. Quotes included, "The Lions of Allah who are all over the globe – some call them lone wolves – should know that they are the West's worst nightmare," and, "It's not necessary to do what Mohammed Atta (of the 9/11 attack) did, it's enough to do what Nidal Hasan (the Ft. Hood shooter) did."
- **October 2014:** The fourth issue of ISIS's *Dabiq* magazine included the text of a speech released in September (see below) that called for attacks on the West. It also included an image of individuals in business suits walking on a sidewalk with the caption "Crusader 'Civilians.'"
- **September 2014:** ISIS released a text version of a speech by Abu Mohammed al-Adnani, the group's primary spokesman calling for attacks in the West. Initially released in English, French, and Hebrew, this was the first significant instance where ISIS incited home-grown attacks rather than encouraging travel to Iraq and Syria. Excerpts from the speech include: "If you can kill a disbelieving American or European – especially the... French – or an Australian, or a Canadian... kill him in any manner or way however it may be. Do not ask for anyone's advice and do not seek anyone's verdict. Kill the disbeliever whether he is civilian or military...."
- **August 2014:** A special edition AQAP English-language magazine titled "Palestine: Betrayal of the Guilty Conscience" attempted to harness anti-Israel sentiment to call for attacks against the

U.S. and the U.K. The magazine reprinted instructions for building pressure-cooker bombs and car bombs from previous issues of *Inspire*. Quotes included, "We tell the Muslims in America and Europe: There is a better choice and easier one to give support to your *ummah* (the Muslim community). That is individual work inside the West such as the operations of Nidal Hassan (the Ft. Hood shooter) and Faisal Shazad (attempted Times Square bomber)."

- **May 2014:** Al Shabaab released a video that called on Muslims living abroad to either join the group in Somalia or undertake "a lone wolf mission" in their home country.
- **March 2014:** The twelfth issue of AQAP's *Inspire* magazine provided instructions for making car bombs along with a list of potential targets in the U.S., U.K., and France. Statements encouraging attacks on the West include, "Whether the brother has a channel to join the brothers [abroad] or not it is better for him to perform his duty of Jihad in the West. On the battlefield, you are just another soldier, but in the West you are an army on your own."

Relationship with Tech Industry

Over the past decade, the League has worked closely with the Internet industry and they have been very responsive to information regarding terrorist and extremist exploitation of their platforms. Our relationship has led to increased successes in mitigating the exploitation of platforms by groups such as ISIS. In addition, working with industry officials, the League developed the ADL Cyber-Safety Action Guide,⁵ a user-friendly online platform where consumers can learn how and where to report bigoted, bullying, or hateful speech to the major Internet providers and social media platforms.

The League has also convened a Working Group on Cyberhate to develop recommendations for the most effective responses to manifestations of hate and bigotry online.⁶ The Working Group includes representatives of the Internet industry, civil society, the legal community, and academia. The Working Group has met five times, and its members have shared their experiences and perspectives, bringing many new insights and ideas to the table. Their input and guidance have been invaluable, and are reflected in a set of Best Practices⁷ which provide useful and important guideposts for all those willing to join in the effort to address the challenge of cyberhate.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our views on this issue of high priority to our organization. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information or if we can be of assistance to you in any way.

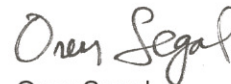
Sincerely,



Marvin D. Nathan
National Chair



Jonathan A. Greenblatt
CEO and National Director



Oren Segal
Director, Center on Extremism
Director, Research Center

⁵ <http://www.adl.org/press-center/press-releases/discrimination-racism-bigotry/new-adl-platform-helps-consumers-take-action-against-internet-hate-speech.html#.Vi58MX6rTct>

⁶ For a comprehensive review of the League's work addressing the scourge of online anti-Semitism since pre-Internet days -- when dial-up bulletin boards were a prominent communications tool -- see *Report of the Anti-Defamation League on Confronting Cyberhate to the 5th Global Forum for Combating Anti-Semitism*, May, 2015, http://www.adl.org/assets/pdf/combating-hate/ICCA-report-2015-With-hyperlinks-May-8-2015_final.pdf

⁷ <http://www.adl.org/combating-hate/cyber-safety/best-practices/#.Vi58F36rTcs>