

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

“Radicalization, Information Sharing and Community Outreach: Protecting the Homeland from Homegrown Terror”

April 5, 2007 (Torrance, CA) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) submitted the following prepared remarks for the Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Terrorism Risk Assessment Subcommittee field hearing entitled “Radicalization, Information Sharing and Community Outreach: Protecting the Homeland from Homegrown Terror”:

“We on the Committee on Homeland Security have been hearing about the threat of domestic radicalization for over a year now. Everyone at the Federal level – whether the Department of Homeland Security, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or the National Counterterrorism Center itself – are all talking about radicalization and the threat that ‘home grown’ terrorists could pose to our nation.

I don’t doubt that the problem of ‘home grown’ terrorism is real – the Torrance arrests are a case in point. If found guilty, the defendants should be held to account for the chilling allegations against them. And I encourage the Department and others to do the analytical work that must be done to provide Congress with a complete understanding of the threat we actually face on the home front.

Whatever the threat, however, we must not vilify people of any particular religious or ethnic group as de facto ‘terrorists’. I am sure I speak for all of the Members here today when I say that just because the defendants in the Torrance prosecution claim to be practicing Muslims does not make them so. Islam is a religion of peace, and the vast majority of people in the American Muslim community were horrified at the crimes for which the defendants have been charged.

To ascribe secret terrorist intentions to practicing Muslims in this country – just because they are Muslim – would be unjust, unfair, and un-American. One need only recall the actions of Timothy McVeigh – himself a ‘radicalized’ American citizen – who took the lives of some 168 Americans fourteen years ago this month. No one foresaw that a white, Roman Catholic, U.S. Army Bronze Star Medal honoree would take up arms against his own countrymen. So, I strongly concur with Ms. Harman’s statement that it is not what someone looks like or what faith they belong to that merits our concern.

Instead, it is their actions. And I strongly support the efforts of law enforcement, the Federal government, and our international allies to arrest and prosecute terrorists when their actions warrant.

I am particularly interested in why the home grown terrorism phenomenon doesn't seem to be developing the same way as it has overseas, and even in neighboring countries like Canada. And I am eager to learn more about how efforts like the Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee can help get people talking to break down the mistrust between the law enforcement and minority communities that might get in the way of preventing the next terrorist attack."

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FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Please contact Dena Graziano or Todd Levett at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499

<http://homeland.house.gov>