

Opening Statement of  
Senator Susan M. Collins  
Committee on Homeland Security  
and Governmental Affairs

“The Threat of Islamic Radicalism to the Homeland”

March 14, 2007

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**Mr. Chairman, over the past two years, this Committee has made an effort to look ahead to identify emerging threats, and to avoid the trap of pursuing only reactive measures to the dangers that face our nation. We responded with landmark legislation to strengthen our intelligence analysis, to improve security at our chemical facilities and at our seaports, and to reform our national preparedness and response systems.**

**The home-grown terrorists who bombed the London subways, as well as those who plotted against airliners flying out of the United Kingdom, focused our attention on domestic radicalization. We observed in England extremist, alienated Muslim citizens targeting their fellow citizens as well as our country for attacks.**

**We anticipated the threat of domestic radicalization in our country and responded with an investigation into this emerging threat, examining, first, radicalization in our prisons.**

**For the past five years, the federal government has attempted to prevent terrorists from entering our country from abroad. Our homeland security efforts have made it increasingly difficult for foreign terrorist to infiltrate and operate in the United States.**

**Increased border security and screening of overseas airline passengers, while critical to help keep out foreign terrorists, do not, however, protect us from “home-grown” terrorists. The rise of domestic terrorist cells inspired by but not directly linked to Al Qaeda is an emerging threat to our nation’s security.**

**After that first hearing last year, Senator Voinovich and I wrote to the White House expressing our deep concern about “the threat posed by the extremist misrepresentation of the Muslim faith.” Our letter continued, “We believe countering this threat domestically, as well as internationally, is a critical element of our plan for victory in the War on Terrorism. We are convinced that to prevent domestic radicalization, which has been identified as a precursor to terrorism, the federal government**

**must prioritize outreach to American Muslims to foster positive relations and build strong community ties.”**

**Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that under your leadership, the Committee is continuing its examination of this issue, and continuing the quest for positive outreach as well as direct measures against threats.**

**The Department of Homeland Security has undertaken efforts to assess the threat posed by those who want to radicalize Americans in order to promote attacks on this nation and our allies. I also want to commend the Department for its awareness of the need to reach out to mainstream Muslims and to reassure them that they are valued fellow citizens.**

**When Secretary Chertoff testified last fall, he wisely stressed that -- and I quote -- “We must not only work across federal, state, and local government to prevent domestic terrorism, but we must build a new level of confidence and trust among the American Muslim community, who are critical partners in protecting our country.”**

**I am, therefore, pleased that DHS, the FBI, and the Department of State and the Department of Treasury, have supplemented their homeland-defense activities with analyses of the concerns of Muslim Americans, and with outreach and engagement programs.**

**We must make the hearts and minds of our Muslim neighbors a constant focus of our attention. The Department of Homeland Security has done**

some valuable work along these lines. Its threat-assessment effort has included analyses of matters that cause concern among some Muslim-Americans, such as aviation watch lists, immigration processing, and perceptions of selective application of laws and procedures. Identifying sources of concern does not mean we must abandon essential security activities, but it obliges us to ensure that rationales are well explained and that implementation is fair and reasonable.

Mr. Chairman, faithful Muslims are our allies in promoting tolerance and protecting all of our citizens against attacks. Our enemy is violent absolutism of any stripe, whether its recruiting efforts are directed at Muslim-Americans or other citizens.

**I look forward to learning more today about the Department's efforts to combine vital and vigorous counter-measures against terrorism with the kind of engagement that can help deprive terrorists of their tools of fear and hatred.**

**Thank you, Mr. Chairman.**

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