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HOMELAND SECURITY BUREAU**

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF TESTIMONY
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE**

OCTOBER 30, 2007

Chairman Lieberman, Senator Collins and other distinguished Members; it is a pleasure to appear before you today to discuss the efforts of the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) and its role and that of local law enforcement in countering violent Islamist extremism.

Introduction

For the record, my name is Michael Ronczkowski. I am the Major of the Miami-Dade Police Department's Homeland Security Bureau.

I am pleased to appear before you the Committee to highlight the efforts and initiatives of the Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD) in the area of homeland security and that of countering violent extremism that poses a threat to the Nation. This issue of extremism, both overseas and homegrown, is important to understand and address and I commend the Committee for holding this hearing.

Extremism, according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is the advocacy of extreme measures or views. No where in the definition is any one group, race, religion or ethnicity singled out. This is why we must remain vigilant and understand that extremism comes from all walks of life and encompasses many ideologies. Once we are able to understand the process that leads some one to the fringe of an ideology and support or pursue violence we will be in a better position to protect our communities from the widest range of potential threats. However, for the purpose of my statement today, I will be discussing the role local law enforcement must play in the fight against violent Islamist extremism. It is important to note that Islamist extremists represent a fringe element within the Muslim community inside the United States and the same can be said of virtually any ethnic or religious community in the United States. Miami-Dade County is a dynamically diverse; ethnically, racially and religiously, perhaps more than most jurisdictions.

Miami-Dade County is a vibrant community uniquely nestled along the southeast tip of the Florida peninsula making it the gateway to the Caribbean and South America. The County's unique location makes it an attractive destination for a multitude of diverse ethnicities and religions as well as being a tourist destination that sees over 10 million visitors spending at least one night per year. The diversity of our visitors is also reflected in the communities within the County.

More than half the residents of the County reside in the unincorporated areas patrolled by the MDPD and remaining population resides in the 35 municipalities within the County. Miami-Dade County encompasses more than 2,000 square miles larger than two states (Delaware and Rhode Island) and 17 countries. According to the 2000 Census, 51 percent of the County's residents are foreign born and 68 percent of the residents speak a language other than English at home. Religious representation is just as diverse as the population it serves. According to the Association of Religious Data Archives in 2000, Miami-Dade County reported having nearly 900 congregations representing nearly 70 religious bodies and various theologies.

The Miami-Dade Police Department provides both traditional a municipal police and sheriff services to nearly 2.5 million residents in Miami-Dade County and is the largest law enforcement agency in the Southeastern United States. One of the services provided to the citizens of Miami-Dade County is provided by the MDPD's Homeland Security Bureau (HSB). The HSB has the primary responsibility for gathering, analyzing, disseminating, maintaining criminal intelligence and homeland security initiatives for the Miami-Dade Police Department and providing pertinent information to concerned federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. In addition, the HSB conducts security and vulnerability assessments and identifies

the security needs of critical infrastructures and sites within Miami-Dade County that could be potentially targeted by terrorists.

It is the aforementioned that I will highlight as I provide insight to how the Miami-Dade Police Department, under the direction of Director Robert Parker and Chief Ricky Smith, has approached the critical issue of countering Islamist extremism in terms of organizing our homeland security initiatives, personnel and resource commitments, and how we work collectively with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Major Cities Chiefs (MCC), and other state and local law enforcement agencies. I will also provide you with information on how our Department has enlisted the public's help to identify suspicious activity, its outreach programs to the local Muslim community, and the steps the Department has taken to understand the diverse populations within its jurisdictions.

Role of Local Law Enforcement

Local law enforcement plays a critical role in the identification, disruption, and information development of Islamist extremists. Since the tragedy of 9/11, law enforcement and public safety agencies have received funding from a variety of homeland security grant programs. Much of the grant funding has been used to address an array of equipment needs such as explosive detection, bio hazard and tactical response. Funding also addressed the development of emergency management plans and training for first responders including the Incident Command System and National Incident Management System. Collectively, the aforementioned use of funds addressed law enforcement and public safety's ability to react, respond and recover. More than six years after 9/11, funding for long-term sustainability (to include training) of analysis centers at not just the state but also the largest law enforcement agencies is imperative if local law enforcement is going to shift the paradigm from a reactive to a proactive approach. Information that has been developed, verified, corroborated, and has been determined to be credible will afford us the opportunity to prepare the 750,000 first responders with actionable information necessary to recognize behavior patterns that will prevent terrorist actions and protect the nation's citizens.

Counter-terrorism is a term that denotes a responsive posture. The Miami-Dade Police Department prefers to utilize the term Anti-terrorism which is a more proactive posture. Regardless of the term used, both are a part of the core mission of nearly all state/local law enforcement throughout the country. Actually you might include Community Oriented Policing, where each of the 750,000 officers/deputies/troopers (fire fighters, public health nurses, code enforcement inspectors) become part of the process of identifying extremist behaviors. In essence, this is the Terrorism Liaison Officer program or a Regional Domestic Security Task Force as is the case in South Florida.

In order to understand the importance the role local law enforcement must play in the fight against violent Islamist extremism those involved must have a fundamental understanding of the roots and ideologies that this fringe element draws upon in developing their distorted ideology. It is not necessary to be a history major. If law enforcement personnel (federal, state and local) can have a basic understanding of the Islamic culture and the roots of extremist ideology, such as that posed by Wahabism and the Muslim Brotherhood, they will be better equipped mentally to identify behavior patterns of extremists. Just as within Christianity there are different denominations and individually held beliefs within each and the same can be said about Islam. However, law enforcement will often remain indifferent about topics dealing with religion and it is this indifference that must be overcome if we are to work collectively with those practicing Islam

but going to identify those on the extreme fringe. Beyond religion, there must also be an understanding of the cultures present within the community at all levels of law enforcement.

Understanding the role of the various law enforcement partners comes with understanding the mission of each of level; federal, state, and local. It is the local law enforcement contingent that serves as the nation's eyes, ears, first responders, and 24/7 patrollers. An often overlooked mainstay of local law enforcement is the traffic stop. During traffic stops local law enforcement nationwide encounter thousands of people, many with extreme ideologies, something rarely done by federal law enforcement officials. With proper observation, awareness and training, local law enforcement officers are likely to observe behavior patterns that can be vital in the identification of individuals with extremist ideology seeking to pursue violence against our citizens. Unlike countries that rely heavily on buses and trains to traverse local jurisdictions, states or even the country, the United States relies heavily on the use of passenger vehicles. Traffic stops, traffic crashes, and citations (parking and moving) are all opportunities to observe behaviors and actions that may be patterns of extremist actions. Over the past 20 years in the United States many local and state officers have encountered extremists who were determined to inflict harm upon the citizens of this country. Some of the more notable traffic stops are:

- 2007 – Ahmed Abda Sherf Mohamed and Youssef Samir Hegahed students from the University of South Florida stopped for speeding by Sheriff's Deputy in South Carolina and in possession of a destructive device
- 2001 – Mohammed Atta (Tamarac, FL) al-Qaeda 9/11 skyjacker ticketed for an invalid drivers license
- 2001 – Zaid Jarah (Maryland State Police), al-Qaeda 9/11 skyjacker, stopped for speeding on 9/9/2001 and his car was later found at the airport
- 2001 – Hani Hanjour (Arlington, VA), al-Qaeda 9/11 skyjacker, stopped in vehicle with a New Jersey tag and in possession of a Florida license, stopped for speeding
- 1994 – Timothy McVeigh (Oklahoma State Trooper), no license plates, Turner Diaries, carrying a weapon, wearing a shirt that read "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."
- 1988 – Yu Kikumura (New Jersey State Police), Japanese Red Army bomb maker, vehicle stop for routine violation led to discovery of bomb materials

Local law enforcement has traditionally had an awareness of criminal activities within their respective jurisdiction. However, in a post 9/11 era law enforcement must take a posture of reacting locally and thinking globally. Not only does local law enforcement have a duty to prevent attacks in their jurisdiction and protect citizens of a specific geographical boundary but they have an obligation to assist state and national efforts. Beyond traffic stops, there are many instances where Islamist extremism has been deeply rooted in the fabric of local communities from Hancock, New York; Bridgeview, Illinois; Lodi, California there have been numerous incidents that expound extremist Islamic beliefs. South Florida has also seen its share of Islamic extremist who have either visited, lived or worked in the region.

When it comes down to it, local law enforcement is far more likely to encounter an Islamic extremist during the performance of their daily duties than a federal investigator. This is not meant as a negative connotation on our federal partners but is just the reality of having between nearly 750,000 officers patrolling all areas of the country 24/7. However, local law enforcement is not going to encounter Usama Bin Laden or any of the senior ranking members of al Qaeda, rather they are more apt to encounter passive or active supporters of the extremist ideology or even a member of the active cadre. Local law enforcement should not be taking a posture of looking for someone with a destructive device but rather look for those puzzle pieces that can

lead to identification of the pre-incident indicators that exist in every terrorist act. Officers should be looking for those items that are often referred to as “material support”. Over the past year and a half there have been several noteworthy cases where Islamic extremists were arraigned, standing trial, or have been sentenced for providing material support in support of terrorism. Many of these support actions dealt with funding, training or weapons.

Just like providing the road officer with the physical equipment necessary and training to perform his duties they are in need of real-time information that identifies actions or activities of extremists to look for while patrolling. It is also important that they receive situational awareness information for data that is beyond their immediate jurisdiction. Information is the key to intelligence and the majority of all law enforcement information comes from patrol officers. It is vital that the development of any information or intelligence be inclusive of local law enforcement officials.

Federal task forces and State managed Fusion Centers do not always drill down to be inclusive of local jurisdictions largely because the bulk of the information lies in a multitude of jurisdictions and databases. Another reason often cited for exclusion is that the concerned local agency does not have officials with the requisite federal clearance(s). It should be noted that this is an actionable item being pursued by the Major Cities Chiefs Association in concert with the DHS and improvement has been noted but a void still exists in some locales. Many jurisdictions have intelligence units with some very tenured officers and some, including the MDPD, have more experienced and larger units than the State. Local jurisdictions are not seeking to compete but rather work collectively and collaboratively with their federal and state partners but obstacles such as clearances and lack of access to federal database systems can slow the process.

Efforts should be made to continue the work of the Major Cities Chiefs with our federal law enforcement partners with regards to terrorism-related topics and initiatives, including the development of joint informational bulletins through the local intelligence units. Fusion Centers are being recognized as a formidable way to develop information and identify extremist behavior patterns but there is a need to define “fusion center” much the same way fusion center standards were developed through the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative. There is a tremendous amount of information that resides in the coffers of local law enforcement just waiting to be mined but funding needs to reach the local law enforcement agencies if they are to push the information to the next level. Information has been “fused” at the local levels for years in order to provide command level personnel with analyzed information necessary to make informed decisions and detectives with identifiable links. However, discovering crime links is different than the identification of extremist activities but it is possible with appropriate training, tools and personnel. There is a need for local law enforcement to look for skills, knowledge, resources, access/abilities and motivation (SKRAM) of extremists that are necessary to take any violent action. SKRAM will enable personnel to identify as many members as possible of any extreme fringe. These actions do not occur within a vacuum and local law enforcement need to look beyond making a single arrest; there will be many coconspirators that will provide material support and they too should be pursued to the fullest.

Miami-Dade Police Department’s Homeland Security Bureau

In response to the extremist threat present in the United States and the fact that many documented extremists have had a presence in Florida, the Miami-Dade Police Department established a Homeland Security Unit. The Unit eventually matured into the Homeland Security Bureau in November 2005. This maturation, under the direction of Director Robert Parker and Chief Ricky Smith, was the result of taking a proactive stance to address extremism at all levels

and to mitigate the threat that may exist in the South Florida region before any action can develop. The MDPD executive staff decided that it was necessary to understand and address any threat, beyond the two detectives assigned to the local Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF) and to commit the resources from within the Department's general fund, with a dedicated staff.

The HSB staff was developed under the same premise that law enforcement should take when pursuing Islamic extremist, that being the identification of; skills, knowledge, resources, access/abilities and motivation (SKRAM). The staff of 65 dedicated and experienced personnel is representative of not only the community based on race, religion and ethnicity, but also benefits of having several languages spoken, including Arabic. The investigative prowess of the personnel assigned to the Bureau is evident in that the average law enforcement experience is between 15-20 years much of which has been in an investigative unit; e.g., Economic Crimes, Robbery, Homicide and General Investigations. The Bureau operates independently, but in concert with, the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) building that houses a variety of federal, state and local agencies. After spending about \$500,000 the Department relocated its fledgling Bureau in this high security building and took the steps necessary to compliment the degree of security necessary to work seamlessly with federal and state partners. Presently, the HSB is staffed with departmental employees but additional representation is in process to include representatives from the County's Corrections and Rehabilitation and Fire Rescue Departments.

As mentioned earlier, the HSB has the primary responsibility for gathering, analyzing, disseminating, maintaining criminal intelligence and homeland security initiatives for the Miami-Dade Police Department and providing pertinent information to concerned federal, state and local law enforcement agencies. In addition, the Bureau's staff also conducts security and vulnerability assessments and identifies the security needs of critical infrastructures and sites within Miami-Dade County that could be potentially targeted by violent extremists.

The Bureau is divided into three operational sections; Intelligence Operations Center (fusion center), Infrastructure Protection Section, and the Intelligence Section which is inclusive of Technical Operations. The Intelligence Operations Center (IOC) is the primary liaison, research and analysis hub. IOC staff monitors information as it is received from local, state, federal and open sources and fuses it with an array of information received within the County and Region. Pertinent information is subsequently disseminated to the appropriate personnel, including road patrol. The Infrastructure Protection Section (IPS) has the responsibility of coordinating the Department's efforts in combating domestic terrorism and educating the public and officers, alike, through public awareness campaigns. This includes conducting security, threat and vulnerability assessments including identifying the security needs of critical infrastructures. The IPS routinely completes homeland security assessments, develops prevention and response plans with private and public sector partners as well as testing them to ensure compliance. The Intelligence Section (IS) consists of the Intelligence Unit (IU) and the Technical Operations Unit (TOU). The IS has the responsibility for gathering, analyzing, disseminating and maintaining intelligence information for the Department consistent with 28CFR. The TOU provides technical support in the form of sophisticated electronic equipment and operational surveillance expertise for all entities of the MDPD.

To address the threat of violent extremists that exist in many arenas, the HSB has a commitment to compliment many of the federal annotated "sectors" as well as "assignments". Although the Bureau often develops "programs or operations" to address specific matters, it was decided by the MDPD staff that it was better practice to not only work within the sector format but to have staff monitor, work with and remain cognizant of those matters germane to our

specific jurisdiction known as “assignments”. Images #1 and #2 depict those sectors and assignments currently being worked with by the HSB staff on a continual basis. The MDPD and the HSB staff believe that it is best to reach out and work with public and private sector partners in a proactive manner. This approach has enabled us to maintain, foster and develop community partnerships and trust that will only aid the public safety community in the identification of any violent extremist threat or ideology that may emerge.

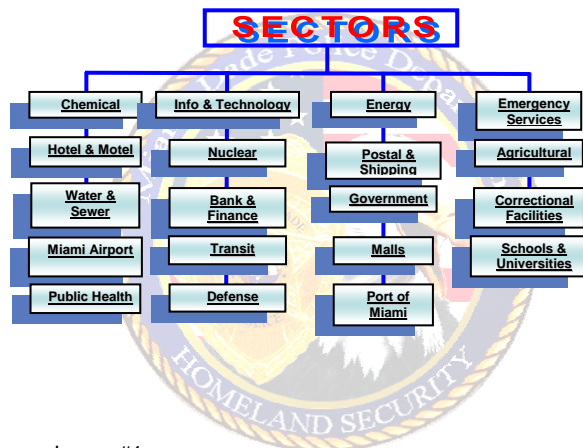


Image #1

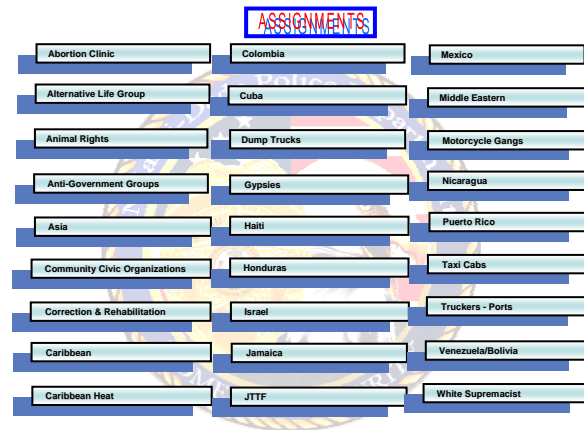


Image #2

The Bureau’s general fund operating and personnel expenses equates to \$7 million dollars each fiscal year. The Bureau has received limited federal funding to off-set expenses such as the COPS Technology grant funds received via Senator Nelson’s office and equipment that has been received through the CEDAP and Buffer Zone Protection programs. One may ask about the millions of homeland security grant fund program monies that have been received in the Miami area. These funds along with Port Security grant allocations have gone largely to the procurement of extremely expensive specialized equipment that is vital in the response to a violent attack as well as training and plan development.

The Miami-Dade Police Department is also very cognizant that it cannot tackle the threat of Islamist extremism alone and that it is important to look beyond traditional jurisdictional parameters. To this end, the Department has committed additional resources both personnel and operational to one of the State’s seven Regional Domestic Security Task Forces (RDSTF). In September 2006, Director Robert Parker was appointed to a four year term as the Chair of the RDSTF’s Region 7 which is an all-hazards approach and includes the region’s 109 law enforcement agencies (image #3). With this appointment, Director Parker assigned a contingent of personnel to plan, coordinate, and develop a regional force representative of all public and private partners designed to be inclusive of all-hazards. Region 7 has several workgroups that meet monthly and the overall body meets quarterly and reports to an Executive Board that is representative of all levels of federal, state and local public safety. It is through the Region’s RDSTF that the Southeast Florida

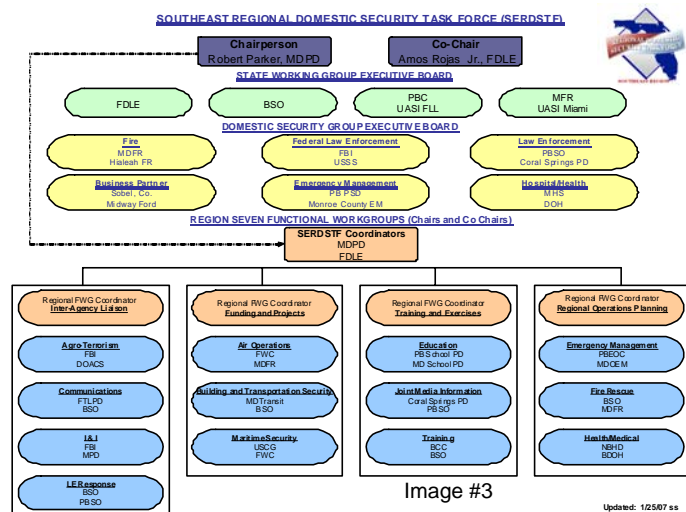


Image #3

Updated: 12/5/07 ss

region is able to identify, plan and commit resources to a truly collaborative effort that provides guidance in an array of matters including the allocation and use of the Urban Area Security Initiative, Law Enforcement Terrorism Prevention Program, and State Homeland Security Grant Program funding.

In response to meetings held between the DHS and the Major Cities Chiefs, the Region decided to take the lead in developing a “regional team” to be assigned on a rotational basis to the National Operations Center (NOC). Collectively with the Palm Beach and Broward County Sheriff’s Offices the Miami-Dade Police Department mans the Southeast Florida Desk at the NOC, located in Washington, D.C., which enables investigators within the region to query a wide variety of federal resources and helps to provide local jurisdictions with situational awareness from a national perspective.

Southeast Florida’s Work with Our Federal Partners

The Miami-Dade Police Department not only has a strong working relationship with State and Local law enforcement and public safety partners but is fortunate to be in a region that has a wide variety of federal partners, which we all have an outstanding bond. Whether it is the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Department of Homeland Security or United States Coast Guard, we work collectively on a daily basis on a wide range of initiatives and cases.

As noted earlier, the MDPD has had a continual presence and working relationship with the FBI’s JTTF. The presence in the JTTF has been expanded to include an additional analyst and detective that are now assigned to the FBI’s Field Intelligence Group (FIG). It is this continual working relationship that enabled us to be successful in many cases including one that receive significant media coverage and became known as the Liberty City Seven. This was a case that culminated in arrests in the summer of 2006 with the arrest of seven men who were plotting to attack the Sears Tower, Miami FBI office and other buildings. The extremists involved sought to obtain funding and support for the plot from a government informant posing as a member of the Islamist terrorist group al Qaeda.

I am proud to report that our relationships with the federal law enforcement community has not kept the status quo but has flourished at many levels. Beyond the FBI enhancements, the MDPD has fostered an excellent working relationship with the DHS as a result of Director Parker’s affiliation with the Major Cities Chiefs Association and numerous homeland security workgroup meetings the Association has conducted with a variety of key DHS decision makers and senior staff. Besides the assignment of personnel to the NOC, the MDPD has worked collectively with the DHS State and Local Office as well as the Office of Intelligence and Analysis on acquiring clearances, secure office space and systems approval, threat assessment guidelines, and law enforcement deployment teams. It should be noted that the MDPD has received several clearances for key investigative personnel from not only the DHS but also from the FBI. Both agencies have also been cognizant of the need to include the MDPD on a variety of investigations and awareness initiatives. Beyond investigations, the DHS has staff members regularly assisting the MDPD and other jurisdictions in the preparation of buffer zone protection initiatives and they also provided several proactive investigative courses for personnel involved in the preparation of Super Bowl XLI. The FBI has also been a valuable resource for providing lectures and training material to our personnel.

With the geographical boundaries of our County largely being water based, our border is continually exposed to intrusion from foreign means. Therefore, we are not only fortunate to have the United States Coast Guard base located in our County but we are privileged to have

an excellent working relationship with the men and women of the base. These men and women assist in protecting our port and shoreline as well as play a vital role in working continually with us via the RDSTF on matters of mutual concern, including training exercises such as Operation Vigilant Sentry.

Although I have only touched on the excellent working relationship we share in the South Florida region with our federal partners, I would be remiss if I did not also include the outstanding relationships we continue to have with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), and the Marshal's Service. After all, terrorism comes in a variety of forms but beyond the forms of terrorism we must remain vigilant for those methods, venues, or mechanisms that may be present and provide material support.

Enlisting the Public's Help

Outreach and partnership with the public is crucial if local law enforcement is going to have any impact on the growth of violent Islamist extremism or the identification of any violent threat that may be developing in the homeland. Homeland security is not just a law enforcement or federal problem. Every citizen in the United States, regardless of race, ethnic makeup, or religion, has the responsibility to remain vigilant and identify threats.

The Miami-Dade Police Department's Homeland Security Bureau Internet website (http://www.miamidade.gov/mdpd/BureausDivisions/bureau_Hls.asp) is one vehicle that has been used to enlist the public's assistance. Through this site, the public can contact the Bureau directly via email or telephone as well as receive information on how to report suspicious activity anonymously through the Bureau's "800" number (866-58ALERT). The site also provides informational flyers and video vignettes for the "seven signs of terrorism"; surveillance, elicitation, testing of security, acquiring supplies, suspicious persons, trial runs and deployment of assets, that citizens can be alert for while performing their daily functions.

One program that the HSB uses is called "Operation Vigilance". This program is a collective effort that is undertaken by members of the HSB in concert with security personnel from various locations such as schools, shopping malls and large venues. Personnel working operation vigilance remain behind the scenes looking for any of the seven signs of terrorism. These initiatives help the private sector into gaining insight to what local law enforcement looks for and considers to be behavioral traits of extremist ideologies.



Image #4

The Homeland Security Bureau has also developed several documents that are provided to the public through awareness campaigns, community meetings and community based officers. Image #4 demonstrates one such brochure that is also printed in Spanish. There is also a business card style handout that contains contact information and can easily be carried in a wallet.

The Bureau also initiated the design of pocket size anti-terrorism quick reference guides in concert with the

Southeast Florida Regional Domestic Security Task Force. These booklets (image #5) were designed in two formats; one for the private sector and one for the public safety community. The private sector guides are provided to media outlets and private security personnel throughout the region.

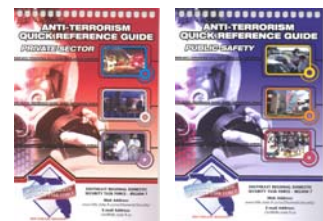


Image #5

Outreach to the Local Muslim Community

A 2005 survey by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) found there were 70,000 Muslims in Miami-Dade, Broward and Palm Beach counties, up from about 45,000 in 2001. They are comprised of Persians, Arabs, South East Asians, Guyanese, Trinidadians, Africans, African-American, Hispanic and Anglo's. There are approximately 17 mosques of which five operate as Mosques through the universities and local organizations primarily on Fridays or major holidays. The other 12 operate daily within Miami-Dade County, spread out from North Miami-Dade through Cutler Ridge.

The HSB is currently working with the following Muslim-based organizations:

1. AMANA (American Muslim Association of North America)
2. CAIR (Council on American Islamic Relations)
3. FIU MESC (Middle East Studies Center)
4. South Florida Middle East Society
5. FIU Gordon Institute (National Security and Strategic Studies Center)

Over the past year and a half, the MDPD's HSB has hosted several classes and forums to discuss Islamic cultural awareness for local law enforcement and members of the RDSTF. We have made presentations for MDPD personnel, the Archdiocese of Miami, the University of Miami, Florida International University and the RDSTF. We are currently working on a new series for 2008. The new presentations will again be addressed to MDPD and RDSTF personnel, but we will also be presented to Corrections, Municipal Agencies in Miami-Dade County, and Miami-Dade County employees. These classes/forums have included speakers from law enforcement, armed forces, several professors and scholars in the field, and attorneys. Both CAIR and AMANA have assisted in the classes/forums by providing ethnic foods, cultural literature, and support for the classes/forums.

Conclusion

I want to thank you again for this opportunity to testify about our Department's efforts to address extremism at all levels, particularly Islamist, and our continual commitment to protecting the homeland. As I am sure you and your colleagues appreciate, the topic of the fringe extremists poses a serious threat, concern and challenge for law enforcement and public safety personnel at all levels. If we are to be successful in this formidable challenge we must remain cognizant that the eyes and ears of this nation reside with it's citizens and the 750,000 local police officers that patrol our streets 24 hours a day / seven days a week. We should not be naïve or led to believe that only our federal law enforcement have the responsibility to address this topic. Local jurisdictions must take the initiative to prioritize, participate and commit to address Islamist extremism without limitations and regardless of federal funding much the way the Miami-Dade Police Department has done.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.