

TESTIMONY OF
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U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Homeland Security Hearing on
“The American Muslim Response to Hearings on Radicalization within their Community”

Thank you Chairman King, Ranking member Thompson, Distinguished members of the committee, for seeking my testimony. My name is Dr. M. Zuhdi Jasser and I am the president and founder of the American Islamic Forum for Democracy.

When I opened my testimony before this committee in March 2011 I thought it was important to address the polarization that existed within these chambers and in the market place of ideas that had stifled the legitimate and needed dialogue about Muslim issues in this country. While we are in many ways more than ever still strangled by this polarization, I believe history will show that your series of hearings in the past 16 months directly confronting the threat of Muslim radicalization in the United States opened the long overdue dialogue both here in the halls of Congress and more importantly in Muslim communities across our great country. It has been a difficult first step, but one so many American Muslims have told us has been of immense value. I commend the committee’s leadership for having the will power to see these hearings through despite the cacophony of critics trying to silence our work.

American Muslim Responses to the Hearings

From that first hearing in March on the American Muslim community’s response to Muslim radicalization, to your subsequent hearings that focused on radicalization in American prisons and the threat to our homeland by Al-Shabaab and to our military, this process has shed the light of day for many Americans upon areas that we need to responsibly *address, diagnose,* and begin the process of *treatment.*

The sign of a healthy democracy is our ability to openly confront threats that exploit many of the core sensibilities we take for granted in our culture. Ultimately, Mr. Chairman, your hearings have allowed us to begin to breach two major obstacles in that treatment:

- 1- The discipline to focus on specific areas inside the United States where the Islamist threat incubates without fear or blindness of denials, apologetics, or political correctness
- 2- The respectful engagement of emerging long-silenced diverse voices from within our Muslim faith communities in a public and pragmatic discussion on how we can best address Islamist radicalization.

One of the most profound results we have seen from this national discussion is the important recognition that American Muslims are not a monolithic community that shares one set of values and one single voice. American Muslims are very diverse in our ideological structure and many

if not most of us do not support the victimization and denial mantra that has been defining our communities for decades.

Immediately after my testimony, we received literally hundreds of emails over 90 percent of which were extraordinarily complementary from American Muslims. We also gained hundreds of new members in the weeks following the hearings. Below are a few exemplary emails from American Muslims which depict the thirst among many American Muslims for a new narrative and a frank discourse on radicalization.

For example on March 10, 2011 I received these emails:

1. Zulfi A. from Virginia stated, *“I commend you for your excellent presentaton at the congress today. I totally agree with you. I felt like for the first time a Muslim is speaking for me. You stole what I have been thinking all along. Seems like no one understood what you are talking about in your reference to 79 billion spend by Saudi's spreading of Wahabi Islam through out the world. I am from Peshawar and live here in Virginia and know CAIR very well from the inception...”*
2. Nabil S. from Ohio stated, *“ALLAH AKBAR DR. JASSER TODAY I AM HAPPY TO SEE A MOSLEM WHO THINKS LIKE ME YOU DID A GREAT JOB ON THE HILL . THE FIRST WORD IN ISLAM IS 'EKRA" READ.”* (emphasis his)
3. Astra K. from Rhode Island stated, *“PEACE BE UPON YOU, BROTHER! AS AN AMERICAN BORN, WHITE, FEMALE CONVERT TO ISLAM, THE RELIGION, I THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART FOR YOUR INCREDIBLY HONEST AND WISE TESTIMONY IN WASHINGTON D.C. WHICH JUST NOW ENDED. I WATCHED IT ONLINE.”* (emphasis hers)
4. Zuhair A. from Kansas, stated, *“Thank you Dr. Jasser, you represent the same belief I have and try to express, I came from Saudi Arabia in 1993 I established my family and roots in the country. What you have been expressing is exactly how I feel, I want to know how to become a member I want to help as much as I can to change the way the Muslim youth feel, in this country and other Arab country, I believe it starts with our home countries if the youth can take these ailing blood sucking dictators of their respective countries and decided to live in a democracy this might help fight the radicalization, it help them understand that.”*

In the wake of these hearings we have seen an exponential growth in the number of Muslims who are willing to courageously step forward in support of American values over Islamism and openly embrace a political system built in reason while rejecting the theological mandate of the Islamic state put forth by Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood and its hundreds of offshoots around the world. We did certainly receive our share albeit a far smaller number of hate filled communications mostly from Muslims who we engaged that were critical about the hearings and had not actually viewed the testimony. Upon viewing, most reported to us that “American Muslim” groups and the media did not report on the substance of the hearing but only vilified Chairman King and Dr. Jasser.

Our own Muslim Liberty Project at AIFD which we started last March 2011 and had its second annual leadership retreat in March 2012 has students from twelve different states engaged in

learning the core values of American society and how the Islamic faith can reject political Islam and thus fit comfortably within American society. Our [American Islamic Leadership Coalition \(AILC\)](#) as a direct result of our testimony in March has expanded from 6 to over 25 Muslim thought leaders and organizations in North America and we are now also looking to Europe to broaden our Western coalition of reformist Muslims who span the political realm from left to right but share one thing alone--- the desire to provide our nation an alternative to the Islamist groups and to help mold a strategy against the threat of political Islam and its Islamist organizations like the Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in the United States.

Beyond the Vagaries of Combating Violent Extremism

Peeling the onion of denial that some form of a “theo-political” problem exists has not been without its challenges and landmarks. The public and private fallout from these hearings alone have been a clinic in exposing some of the pathologies hampering the progress of homeland security and genuine long-lasting counter-radicalization. Ten years after 9-11 our heroes at the Department of Homeland Security remain occupied predominantly with a highly sophisticated *whack-a-mole* program that is entirely dependent upon finding and capturing radical Islamists when they are in the final steps of their long Islamist journey having chosen a militant path of Islamism and on the verge of committing an act of terror.

As Mr. John Cohen [stated last November](#) before members of this committee, the Department is “*not using 'radicalization.'* [Its] *focus is not to police thought but to prevent violence.*”¹ For me as an American Muslim this is not about just treating the symptom of violence, it is about fighting the disease that leads so many of my co-religionists down a path that ends in violence. Would we not be smarter to develop programs that keep them from stepping out on to that Islamist path much earlier on in their radicalization before they get to the violent endpoint? It is not about policing thought. It is about demonstrating to a vulnerable part of our society that American values and freedom is the better pathway for their faith practice and in no way conflicted with our beautiful faith of Islam.

In my [first testimony](#)² before you, I laid out examples of that continuum of radicalization from the insidious, non-violent separatist Islamism to that militant more aggressive Islamism which directly threatens us. Our humble experience in the wake of these hearings has been that given the right environment, the vast majority of Muslims welcome assistance in confronting that subset of Muslims who are Islamists so that we can then better prevent the fueling of that subset of Islamists that are militant. The communications we received from so many Muslims a few of which I shared with you confirm this. If we cannot undertake in these halls the development of a strategy against the Islamist ideology that exploits America, exploits the faith of Islam, and exploits our freedoms to avoid critique, then we have shirked our responsibility as Americans and I submit also as observant Muslims.

¹ Andrea Stone, “Counterterrorism Czar Resists Muslim Labels, As Critics Say Right-Wing Threat Looms Larger”, (Huffington Post, November 17, 2011)

² M. Zuhdi Jasser, M.D., “Testimony of M. Zuhdi Jasser, M.D.,” Testimony before the U.S. House Committee on Homeland Security, “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and the Community’s Response,” March 10, 2011

Unfortunately, the White House’s counterterrorism strategy released in July 2011 bears out this same problem. I have attached [a response from our American Islamic Leadership Coalition](#) (Appendix I) which this committee distributed to Congress as reading material in August 2011. Therein over 25 Muslim leaders and their organizations noted that while the White House’s National Strategy for Counterterrorism (NSCT) released on June 28, 2011 used the word “ideology” over 20 times it never identified what that ideology was. We identified areas of concern. We noted that the report:

1. Appeared to reflect a largely pro forma, rather than substantive, approach to countering extremist ideology and the radicalization of Muslims in the U.S. and abroad.
2. Does not define individual rights, or articulate a systematic strategy to promote them.
3. Fails to define al-Qa’ida’s ideology, and its relationship to Islamist ideology and movements in general.
4. Provides no criteria for determining with which Muslim groups the Administration will conduct its outreach programs.
5. Fails to articulate a strategy to counter Islamist ideology in general, or —cyberjihad in particular.
6. Focuses narrowly upon al-Qa’ida as the enemy.

Our coalition then laid out specific recommendations to improve upon these shortcomings:

1. The U.S. government should clearly and publicly define the ideology of al-Qa’ida that we seek to defeat, and realistically acknowledge its intimate links with Islamist ideology and political movements in general. Ignorance and/or lack of honesty in this arena is no virtue. This necessarily entails discussing, and addressing, the manner in which theocratic regimes in Iran and Saudi Arabia export their Khomeinist and Wahhabi/Salafi ideologies worldwide, thereby fueling the spread of Islamist terrorism, and strengthening other Islamist groups such as the Taliban, Hamas, Hezbollah and the Muslim Brotherhood’s global *dawa* (proselytism) movement;
2. The U.S. government should distinguish between the religion of Islam and Islamist ideology (—a distorted interpretation of Islam), whose adherents seek to conflate their own political agenda with the religion of Islam itself. Reverence and respect for the religion of Islam does not and should not entail submission to the dictates of an ambitious minority of Muslims who seek to instrumentalize religion for the acquisition of worldly power;
3. The U.S. government should acknowledge the diversity of American Muslims, and recognize that genuinely pluralistic, tolerant and spiritual Muslim leaders possess the theological legitimacy, authority and credibility required to counter Islamist ideology and movements *from within Islam*, and should be encouraged and supported in their efforts to do so;
4. The U.S. government should engage non-Islamist Muslim groups to help develop and implement effective counter-radicalization programs, which affirm the principles of liberty and individual rights, *within an Islamic narrative*;

5. This engagement should facilitate the production of compelling content (narratives) and their distribution, through proactive use of the internet, which is one of al-Qa'ida's primary means of ideological indoctrination and recruitment;
6. The U.S. government should support the development of robust, on-the-ground efforts to expose the brutal reality of Islamist oppression, violence and terror, and broadcast the message of Love, Mercy and Compassion—which fosters respect for human dignity and individual.

As a faith community, focusing on the militants and violence alone is an exercise in futility which gives non-violent Islamists the ability to appear mainstream. Focusing only on violence forces non-Muslims to approach the issue of radicalization in an overly simplistic binary approach of--- *good Muslim nonviolent, bad Muslim violent*. The reality is that Muslims who are *violent extremists* do not become so overnight. They come to that endpoint along with common travelers within the global supremacist political movement which is Islamism or political Islam. Islamism defined is the desire of some Muslims to create Islamic states or societies based in the interpretation of Islamic law (shariah) by faith leaders where the Muslim community (*ummah*) is also synonymous with the “Islamic nation-state”. These quasi-oligarchical leaders can be imams, clerics, or Islamist scholars who believe that their expertise gives them the right to determine and impose their interpretations of religion upon Muslim masses. Thus, Islamists ensnared in the theo-political movement of Islamism are inherently unable to identify with and bond positively to our own American concept of a nation based in an Establishment Clause, the separation of mosque and state, a manmade Constitution and reason. .

If you witness the public response of Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in the United States to these hearings you will see the lengths they go to in vilifying anyone who dares address the threat at its source—Islamism. An observant Muslim becomes labeled by the Muslim Public Affairs Council (MPAC) and Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) as “astro-turf” or “Uncle Tom.” The term Islamophobia is used incomprehensibly against devout Muslims as a battering ram to shun us within our own local faith communities for having the audacity to say that we have a problem and they are contributing to it. These groups wrap themselves in the blanket of my faith and imagined civil rights abuses in an attempt to deny Muslims like me a voice in this argument. Imagine Ranking Member Thompson if Republicans were able to remove your voice from the debate. Despite accusations to the contrary, our fight against Islamism is not about denying someone a seat at the lunch counter it is about fighting a political construct that is at complete odds with the Constitution of the United States.

With persistent name-calling, ad hominem attacks against our work and baseless accusations of Islamaphobia, MPAC, CAIR and their colleagues are extremely successful at silencing or striking fear in the voices of reform and opposition. But there is immeasurable teaching value in our witness of these actions. These hearings will eventually compel these Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups to do one or all of the following:

1. Defend or condemn the ideological constructs of Islamism, the Islamic state, and political Islam and its instrument of shariah law

2. Refute or admit the direct connection, [conveyor belt](#) between Islamism and the very real threat of Islamist militancy.³
3. Engage all Muslims in a very public debate about the need to reform against theological constructs that fuel Islamism.
4. Demonstrate ideological diversity and pluralism offering genuinely equal respect and opportunities to all Muslims in our right to define our own Muslim identity.
5. Publicly debate the central role in which the self-identification of Islamists as *Muslim citizens* rather than *American citizens* has in charting their course towards separatism and radicalization.

These hearings have also, moreover, begun the process of compelling the rest of America to also develop a coherent strategy against the ideologies that fuel radicalization by doing one or all of the following:

1. Creating platforms and opportunities for American Muslims to engage Islamists in #1 through #5 above.
2. Set aside partisan exploitation of Muslim issues in order to actually address non-partisan solutions from within the Muslim consciousness for the greater good of national security.
3. Cease the labeling as “bigoted” or “Islamophobic” those individuals Muslim or non-Muslim with the courage to dissect theo-political constructs of Muslim radicalization.
4. Realize that the ideological battle between liberalism or modernity and Islamism is not only manifested in the Arab awakening of the Middle East and North Africa but also a reality for Muslims living in the United States.

The Arab awakening has given the United States many teaching moments. Before these hearings and the upheaval in Middle East, the terms Islamist or political Islam were labeled by many as being derogatory conspiracy theories. After the raging debate in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya there can no longer be any doubt that Islamists exist and they are prevalent. Groups like the Muslim Brotherhood believe that political advocacy and their political parties are synonymous with their Muslim identity. While these groups can be dominant in the political arena in these countries, they clearly do not have a monopoly on Muslim political thought. Again there is significant ideological diversity in Muslim populations and the current backlash against the Brotherhood in Egypt demonstrates that there are plenty of advocates for secular liberal democracies. They just are not as well organized or rooted yet as the Brotherhood and other Islamists in region.

This is important to the United States because our own Muslim populations are born from immigrants from this region and while far more familiar with democracy may in fact have not reformed against Islamism and have generally the same diversity between Islamists, non-Islamists, and anti-Islamists. Immigrating to the United States and being raised here does not neutralize the lure of Islamism or contrarily immediately make us advocates of Jeffersonian

³ Steven Merley, “The Muslim Brotherhood in the United States,” *Research Monographs on the Muslim World Series No 2, Paper No 3*, Hudson Institute (April, 2009)

democracy. In fact with only nascent advocates for liberty, Islamism has flourished on the heels of a petro-dollar fueled Muslim Brotherhood evangelical movement into the West.

The United States needs a *Liberty Doctrine* for our approach to the changes in the Middle-East and American Muslims need a *Liberty Doctrine* for the continual education of our children or we risk breeding an ideology that will tear at the very fabric of what it means to be an American. Extensive research and documentation on the connection between the ideology of the Islamic state (and its closely associated corollary of Caliphism) and eventual radicalization has been provided by the work of experts like Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, Director of Research at the Center for Asymmetric Threat Studies at Sweden's National Defense College⁴ and Dr. Douglas M. McLeod, project lead at the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. In his work "Support for the Caliphate and Radical Mobilization,"⁵ (Appendix II) he basically chronicled what my own research and experiences as a Muslim have demonstrated. He stated,

"Our research demonstrates that the Caliph imagery is a strong motivator within Muslim discourse. Pious zealots are often swept into the political expression of Jihad while attending small study groups (Hairgrove & McLeod, 2008). For some Muslims, the imagery of an Islam reflective of the golden era of Muhammad is a religious value worthy of pursuit in terms of life goals, finances, and personal sacrifice "in the cause of Allah." This ideological war for the "hearts and minds" for Muslims is considered a war for a "collective identity" and has no shortage of patriots willing to join the struggle."⁶

The work of A.H.E. Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid, former President of Indonesia who edited the book, *The Illusion of the Islamic State* recently released in English lays out "How an Alliance of Moderates Launched a Successful Jihad Against Radicalization and Terrorism in the World's largest Muslim-Majority Country" (Appendix III).

These leading scholars, Muslim leaders, and intellectuals have laid out the centrality of Islamism to the radicalization process and the separatism that drives the "violent extremism" of Islamism. These hearings have launched America into the long overdue educational process of understanding the existence of a battle in our souls as Muslims between a personal spiritual path of Islam and the theo-political movement of Islamism.

Countering Islamism in our Military: the Need to Develop a Strategy

There are many fronts in this battle and these hearings have begun to address some of those. As a former US Navy Lieutenant Commander and medical officer your hearings on the radicalization of Muslims inside the US Military is of particular importance to me. Muslims serve the U.S. Military with pride and distinction every day. When we allow political correctness and, as

⁴ Dr. Magnus Ranstorp, "Preventing Violent Radicalization and Terrorism: The Case of Indonesia", Swedish National Defence College (2009)

⁵ Dr. Douglas McLeod and Frank Hairgrove, "Support for the Caliphate and Radical Mobilization", Start Research Brief (January 2008)

⁶ McLeod and Hairgrove, 3.

former Army Chief of Staff General Casey has discussed numerous times, a desire for diversity to override our commitment to truth, we insult that service. There is a threat both inside and outside of our military and if we cannot address it we leave our service members vulnerable.

Our armed forces are becoming ground zero for American Muslims in the ideological struggle between Americanism and Islamism. Thus, inside our military is a distinct opportunity with regards to how we as a nation can confront that internal conflict of identification between whether a Muslim becomes an Islamist or becomes a patriot who serves heroically in our armed services. I would like to build upon my discussion in the first hearing about Maj. Nidal Hasan the perpetrator of the Nov 5, 2009 Fort Hood massacre. At the time I remarked about how the simple profound difference between his consciousness and mine as American soldiers holds the key to creating more effective counterterrorism programs. (Appendix IV)

Unfortunately Nidal Hasan is not the only example. More recently, U.S. Army Pvt. Naser Abdo points to that serious conflict. Pvt. Abdo was ultimately convicted recently of planning a copycat attack on the members of the Fort Hood military community. There is an irreconcilable conflict between allegiance to the United States, with its secular Constitution, and fealty to the consciousness of an Islamist state that centers on the Qur'an as its constitution and the *ummah* (Muslim nation) as its global citizenry. The crucial and difficult question a Muslim soldier needs to be asked is this: "Do you have any sense of loyalty to the ummah and its Islamic state?" Those who answer in the affirmative pose a problem. The Pentagon's 2010 after-action report, "*Protecting the Force: Lessons from Fort Hood*," revealed a blind spot by failing to address the warning signs of Islamist radicalism that were abundantly clear prior to the massacre. Pvt. Abdo's history has shown again that our military leadership is simply not equipped to deal with the challenges political Islam presents to national security and the protection of our armed forces.

Private Abdo made public pleas that his faith and military service were incompatible because of alleged obstacles to his religious practices, unsubstantiated claims of harassment, and a refusal to go to Afghanistan. He claimed that an abundance of religious sources told him to abandon a non-Muslim army. He told [ABC News](#) that he wanted out so he could "spend his life combating Islamophobia."⁷ In my own 11 years of service, not once did I feel a conflict between my orthodox practice of Islam and my service as a Naval officer. Conversely, the assistant deputy secretary of the Army shockingly granted Pvt. Abdo his conscientious objector (CO) status in 2011 and recommended dismissal from the service. But in the meantime he was charged by the military for possession of child pornography on his government computer and went AWOL from Fort Campbell, Ky. He was apprehended when a gun store owner in Killeen, Texas, reported his suspicious purchases and behavior to the police.

The Army's approval of his status as a conscientious objector deeply damaged the perception of Muslims in the military, because it implicitly validated Islamism as a protected belief system synonymous with being Muslim. Yet the vast majority of American Muslims are in the U.S. because we reject Islamism. Clearly, not only do we not have a mechanism to filter for Islamism in our military enlistments and security clearances, but we are giving their political separatist

⁷ *World News with Diane Swayer*, ABC News, "'Devout Muslim Soldier Hopes to Avoid Deployment to Afghanistan'", August 31, 2010.

believes the protections of religious freedom. Muslims have also fought many wars against other Muslims since Islam's inception. Certainly, for the vast majority, our allegiance is first and only to the U.S. and never to any Islamist constructs of the Islamic state, the *ummah*, or *jihad*. Faisal Shahzad, the confessed Times Square bomber, stated to the judge at his arraignment, "*We Muslims are one community. We are not divided.*" He proclaimed that he was a "*mujahid*" or a "*Muslim soldier.*" Nidal Hasan similarly called himself a "Soldier of Allah." Nasser Abdo had a year-long campaign denouncing the military he volunteered to serve. This self-identification is central to the Islamist threat. Yet the theological underpinnings of Islamist radicalization remain for the most part ignored by military officials, who fear appearing to discriminate against Muslim soldiers. It would be like being afraid of identifying the impact of communist ideologies upon our troops at the height of the Cold War against the Soviets. That fear of political correctness has been bolstered by leading Muslim Brotherhood legacy groups in America who trumpet grievances at the expense of counter-radicalization strategies. Their platform in fact has a major obstacle to counter-radicalism: the empowerment of political Islam via Islamic revivalism and an aversion to reform via the separation of mosque and state. As an observant Muslim, I am testifying to you that we desperately need to develop a strategy against Islamism and as I listened to your joint hearing on radicalization within our military, I was hoping that one of the primary takeaways be that we urgently develop a strategy against Islamism.

The US military can serve as an ideal laboratory to address these central ideological conflicts between Americanism and Islamism. The threat of Islamism is manifold and we have no national consensus or strategy. We have our work cut out for us. For example, Salah Al-Sawy of the Assembly of Muslim Jurists of America (AMJA) concluded in a 2008 online fatwa, "As for optionally obtaining citizenship of a non-Muslim country it is definitely prohibited without a doubt, moreover it could be a form of apostasy." (Appendix V) An AMJA paper in 2009 stated that, "the basic conflict between the declaration of faith and testimony that there is no God except Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah and the declaration and pledge of Allegiance of the USA is irreconcilable." (Appendix VI) Many imams at AMJA are cross-pollinated with the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and other Islamist groups. These ideas need to be confronted and yet they have not.

These hearings have provided the stimulus to do so and now we need to follow through. There are many Muslim leaders who can lead that defense of liberty and understand the need to separate mosque and state. We must acknowledge that there are two sides to this debate within Islam and we need to take the side of liberals over that of the Islamists. Our armed services should declare a moratorium on all Muslim requests for conscientious objector status claimed on the basis of their Islamic faith. Our resources should be directed at how we can promote anti-Islamist liberal ideas into American Muslim consciousness so that they can develop reform-minded strategies to inoculate Muslims against Islamism. Congress should be proactive in pushing for change within the military to recognize that turning a blind eye to the threat is perilous for all Americans including American Muslims and is in and of itself politically incorrect.

Teaching and Training our Military

These hearings have also opened the national discussion and given us opportunities finally to

breach the poisoned atmosphere of political correctness. Within the military there has been recent discussion in the media about rare instances of some virulently anti-Muslim materials.

It was revealed, for example, that at the Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, one lecturer discussed reducing “Islam to cult status” and that we should “declare all-out war against Islam” among other harmful inappropriate comments to officers in training. But while there is no proof that this is a pattern, American Islamist grievance groups spread this story around the world in foreign media using it to amplify their own mantra that America is in a war against Muslims and Islam. I would like to see our nation confront Islamism but that should always be done at the same time that we recognize that Muslims must lead that solution from within and that our best allies are observant Muslims who acknowledge and take seriously the Islamist threat. If we let revelations about fringe teachers be dominated by grievance groups who dismiss any discussion of reform and claim a monopoly on Islamic discourse we will prevent the very discussion your hearings have encouraged us to have. I urge you to push our nation even further down the path of engagement of these difficult issues and threats we have. Again, the military should be a laboratory in which we can begin to aggressively confront those issues and dissect the ideologies that threaten our security while also keeping our eye on the solutions from within the House of Islam. ([Appendix VII](#))

The corrective course of action we take at this point is just as crucial to protect our military members from the equally suffocating harness of political correctness. This ping pong match between the extremes of "all Muslims are our enemy" and "all Muslims are victims" is stifling the teaching and the conversations that need to be had to fix the very real threat that Muslims who adhere to a militant form of Islamism present. At AIFD we do in fact recognize that the "Islam" of jihad, violence, Al Qaeda, Wahhabism, and political Islam is A version of Islam but it is **NOT** our Islam. That distinction, that central hope should always be part of government training.

In the wake of recent revelations, we are already hearing cries for the [retraining of all of the service members](#)⁸ who have gone through the course at Norfolk and [unscrupulous connections](#)⁹ being made between this course and the Quran burning incident and the troops who desecrated the remains of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. CAIR has recklessly pedaled this incendiary information on [Al Jazeera](#)¹⁰ which is often quite unfriendly media to our military and American interests. The Muslim grievance mill of CAIR combined with some of their colleagues on the left have wasted no time in using this incident as an opportunity to smear the military and to fear monger within the Muslim community that there is a vast right wing conspiracy plotting against American Muslims. Lawrence Korb from the Center for American Progress went as far as to recklessly claim on the [BBC](#)¹¹ that this event occurred because the U.S. military has elements that are overly influenced by Christian Evangelicals who believe that the U.S. is at war with Islam. Korb asserted that the military is more conservative than the broader public and that is what created the atmosphere for this type of course to be able to exist.

⁸ Kari Huus, MSNBC.com, “Outrage, calls for action over anti-Muslim materials in military training”, May 11, 2012.

⁹ Greg Milam, Sky News, “Military Course Called For 'Muslim Hiroshima'”, May 11, 2012.

¹⁰ *Inside Story Americas*, Al Jazeera English, “The US military's 'anti-Islam classes'”, May 12, 2012.

¹¹ *Today*, BBC Radio 4, “US condemns 'War with Islam' training”, May 11, 2012

The reaction of some of these groups to the information released completely ignores the fact that there is a very real theo-political threat to our country. While some of the materials have proven to be inappropriate and reckless, these critics completely miss that those concepts simply are an equal and opposite reaction to the dangerous Islamist apologetics of denial that have filled the media and government policy advisories. How quickly Islamist groups and many in the media forget the case of Louay Safi who was relieved from training service members at Fort Bliss in Texas? Based on reporting from the *Dallas Morning News*, the Army suspended his contract because of his connections to the [American Islamist movement](#). Safi had been in charge of certifying Muslim chaplains for the US Military on behalf of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA), while teaching at Fort Bliss. In an internet posting after the Fort Hood massacre he whitewashed Islamism and blamed Hasan's extremism on "the systematic demonization of marginalized groups."¹²

Whether Islamists like Safi who dismiss Islamism and paint Muslims as victims or lecturers like Lt. Col. Dooley who target an entire faith and its adherents, both approaches are doomed to certain failure. The politically correct atmosphere in the military and in our country, however, has prevented an adequate balanced public vetting of the core threats our service members and citizens face domestically and abroad.

We need to have a happy medium. The military should not use material or lecturers that see all Muslims as the enemy and should not use the lowest hanging fruit of Muslim organizations which are Islamists or apologists for Islamist movements. They should instead begin to work with Muslim organizations that truly have our national security interests at heart, such as the growing [American Islamic Leadership Coalition](#). Great Britain did the same when they found that they were working with the wrong organizations. They realized that their PREVENT program failed because they worked predominantly with Islamist groups and didn't side with organizations that were liberal and secular minded. Prime Minister Cameron has since called for a "muscular liberalism" when working with Muslims. (Appendix VIII)

As our government addresses these training issues both within the military and similarly with questions that have been raised regarding the FBI and [NYPD](#) training programs, it is imperative that these evaluations are not done in a vacuum and that they are not directed by organizations that look at this problem through the lens of Islamism and Muslim victimhood.

Pathway to Solutions

Similar to how this Committee on Homeland Security has addressed Muslim radicalization, we desperately need to develop a national strategy that understands the theo-political movement (Islamism) that threatens us while also balancing the fact that the solution to this threat comes from within the Muslim community and by supporting Muslim organizations who embrace secular, liberty minded governance. These hearings will have value as long as they continue to directly confront the need for frank dialogue and create avenues for Muslims and all Americans to address the problem and penetration of Islamism within our faith communities. The histrionic

¹² Brooke Egerton, "U.S. torn over whether some Islamists offer insight or pose threat", *Dallas Morning News*, February 12, 2010

reaction of leading American Islamist organizations before these hearings and then their silence afterwards should point Americans to the fact that the groups are unwilling to address root causes and ideologies. Americans should also note that when they ask the question- “where are Muslims with the courage to confront radical ideologies?” the answer is that we are vilified, smeared, and targeted by grievance groups that stand to lose a great deal when we Muslims finally crack the code on how to defeat “political Islam”.

Toward that end, these hearings have been a teaching moment that has set the stage for just that journey. From here, I believe we should:

1. Determine a consensus on how the US Government defines and engages Islamists at all of its levels within the legislative, executive, and judicial branches. [Recent revelations](#) that the White House, for example, has been meeting with organizations like CAIR which the FBI has blacklisted demonstrates an inconsistency that reveals a deep-seated ideological disconnect in understanding the threat we face to homeland security.¹³
2. Lay out a clear policy on how the US Government engages the Muslim Brotherhood abroad and its legacy groups and apologists domestically. Sec. State Hillary Clinton surprisingly stated last November that “*What parties call themselves is less important to us than what they actually do.*”¹⁴ And on June 13, 2012, five members of Congress including Cong. Michelle Bachman (R-MN), Trent Franks (R-AZ), Louie Gohmert (R-TX), Tom Rooney (R-Fl), and Lynn Westmoreland (R-GA) [sent letters](#) to the Inspectors General of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the Department of Defense, the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the Department of State asking about the involvement of the Muslim Brotherhood in agency policies.¹⁵ It is time that we stopped dancing around our approach to the Muslim Brotherhood and it’s constantly morphing positions. We need a consistent strategy that realizes the basic disconnect between Islamism and western democracy and realizes that our government facilitates these organizations to our own detriment.
3. We need to develop a *Liberty Doctrine* both domestically and internationally that embraces what is exceptional about America. Prime Minister Cameron of the United Kingdom has made similar calls for a “muscular liberalism”. (Appendix VIII)

Our founding fathers were very comfortable discussing ideologies that covered the intersection of religion and politics in the public space. Your hearings have appropriately pushed our communities to return to that tradition and become better Americans, and better Muslims. As a Muslim who fears for the future of our youth and the influence upon them of the domestic and global Islamist movements, it is actually my love of my faith that gives the fuel to counter Islamists and advocate for more hearings that continue to expose the many fronts in the battle of ideas against Islamism and its advocates.

¹³ Neil Munro, “Administration admits to ‘hundreds’ of meetings with jihad-linked group”, *The Daily Caller*, June 8, 2012.

¹⁴ Tiffany Gabbay, “Clinton: U.S. will work with Arab Springs Islamist parties”, *The Blaze*, November 7, 2011

¹⁵ Erica Ritz, “House Members Demand Answers on Depth of U.S. Involvement With the Muslim Brotherhood”, *The Blaze*, June 15, 2012