July 31, 2017

The Honorable Ron DeSantis  
Chair  
National Security Subcommittee  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Stephen Lynch  
Ranking Member  
National Security Subcommittee  
House Oversight and Government Reform Committee  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman DeSantis and Ranking Member Lynch:

We write to provide the views of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) for the House Oversight and Government Reform National Security Subcommittee hearings on “Combating Homegrown Terrorism.” We ask that this statement be included as part of the official hearings record.

The Anti-Defamation League  
Since 1913, the mission of the Anti-Defamation League has been to "stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment for all." For decades, the League has fought against bigotry and anti-Semitism by exposing and reporting on extremist groups who spread hate and incite violence.

ADL is now the foremost non-governmental authority on domestic terrorism, extremism, organized hate groups, and hate crimes. Through our 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. ADL’s team of experts – analysts, investigators, researchers, and linguists – use cutting-edge technology to monitor, track, and disrupt extremists and terrorists worldwide. The League provides law enforcement officials and the public with extensive resources, such as its analytic reports on extremist trends and its Hate Symbols¹ and Terror Symbols databases.

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 https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols
Support for Properly-Crafted CVE Programs
ADL strongly supports properly-crafted CVE programs. We believe an “all hands on deck” holistic approach is required to confront the sophisticated recruitment efforts employed by domestic extremist groups and by ISIS and other terror groups. Through the CVE program launched under President Obama, the Department of Homeland Security had administered federal grants to nongovernmental organizations and higher-education institutions to carry out programs that counter the potential for violence from domestic terrorists and homegrown violent extremists.

ADL professionals were directly involved in the February, 2015 White House Summit on Countering Violent Extremism.² 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, participated and provided insights 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 had developed collaborative networks of government and non-governmental stakeholders. ADL served as 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. 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.³

Identifying the Threat
In the United States, adherents of a variety of extremist movements – from white supremacists to violent left-wing ideologues, 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. Understanding the diverse list of perpetrators that threaten the Jewish and other minority communities is the first step to protecting them from violent extremism.

Right Wing Extremism
Over the past 10 years (2007-2016), domestic extremists of all kinds have killed at least 372 people in the United States. Of those deaths, approximately 74% were at the hands of right-wing extremists such as white supremacists, sovereign citizens, and militia adherents.⁴ Right-wing extremists have been responsible for plotting at least 150 acts of terror in the United States over the past 25 years.⁵

Right-wing extremists choose many targets for their anger, most frequently government, law enforcement, and racial and religious targets. The most common religious targets are Jews and Muslims, while the most common racial targets were African-Americans, including multi-racial targets.

The White supremacists who target minority communities for acts of terror and violence include adherents of every major segment of their movement, including neo-Nazis, racist skinheads, the religious sect Christian Identity, and the Alt Right. The militia movement has specially embraced a particular type of bigotry: anti-Muslim hatred. This Islamophobia has taken numerous forms, from armed protests in front of mosques to a major terrorist plot in October 2016 in Garden City, Kansas, where three militia members were arrested in connection with an alleged plot to blow up an apartment complex that primarily housed Muslim Somali-American residents. We should be concerned that the militia movement could produce similar terror attempts aimed at Muslims in the future. ⁶

The social networking revolution from 2006-2009 made it easier for extremist ideas and tactics to spread very far, very quickly. This facilitated the emergence of new extremist movements, such as the white supremacist Alt Right, to quickly gain followers, and helped established movements, such as the sovereign citizen movement, to rapidly resurge. Social networking has also provided opportunities for extremists to meet each other and even to plot online. The October 2008 school attack plot in Tennessee and the Georgia militia plot of February 2014 are two examples where extremists who connected online later met in person to plot terrorist acts. ⁷

**Left Wing and Black Nationalist Violence**

On Wednesday, June 14, a congressional baseball team in the midst of a morning practice was attacked by a lone gunman. The U.S. House Majority Whip, Rep. Steve Scalise (R-LA), was seriously injured, and several others were also shot.

In the wake of the 2016 presidential election, the ADL has been tracking growing anger within the American left, directed at President Trump, his administration, and political allies. In recent months, the ADL has been warning law enforcement personnel about the possibility of an increase in left-wing violence as a result of the growing anger. The shootings in Alexandria appear to be an example of this.⁸

While from the 1960s through the 1980s extreme Black Nationalist groups like the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army killed dozens of people, including many police officers, violent Black Nationalism decreased sharply after that. Over the course of the past year, however, Black Nationalist violence has taken a deadly toll, responsible for the deaths of eight police officers in Dallas and Baton Rouge in 2016. In July 2016, Micah Xavier Johnson, who had ties to black nationalist groups such as the New Black Panther Party, killed five police officers (and injured nine others) in Dallas, Texas, in an ambush attack aimed at police who were maintaining public order at a Black Lives Matter protest. That same month, Gavin Eugene Long ambushed and shot six police officers, three of them fatally, in Baton Rouge. Long was also an adherent of Black Nationalism as well as the anti-government sovereign citizen movement. Both incidents were acts of “retaliation” against police officers in response to controversial police shootings of African-American men.⁹

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⁸ https://news.vice.com/story/extremism-experts-are-starting-to-worry-about-the-left
Extremism Sparked by Radical Interpretations of Islam

Over the past 10 years, about 24% of victims killed by domestic terrorists were at the hands of domestic Islamic extremists. One of the most striking elements of today’s domestic threat picture is the role that a growing number of American citizens and residents motivated by radical interpretations of Islam have played in criminal plots to attack Americans in the U.S. and abroad. Last year, in the worst mass shooting in American history, Omar Mateen opened fire inside Pulse, a gay nightclub in Orlando, killing 49 people. During the shooting, Mateen, an American citizen born in New York, declared his allegiance to the Islamic State (ISIS). As demonstrated by this horrific shooting, it is clear that there are deliberate attempts by international terrorist groups that justify and sanction violence to appeal to and engage sympathizers in the U.S. A disturbing number of cases also demonstrate the degree to which hatred of Jews and Israel play a part in radicalization process of homegrown extremists. However, efforts to explore these legitimate security concerns should not be overwhelmed by the kind of unfair stereotyping and prejudice that has too-frequently accompanied recent public debates. This is especially true now, given the ADL has tracked an objectionable, intensified level of anti-Muslim bigotry in a variety of public forums, as discussed below.

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, and appeals for violence and anti-Semitism – terrorists 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, often 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. Approximately half of the 150 terrorist incidents described in a 2017 ADL report on 25 years of right-wing terrorism were perpetrated by lone wolf offenders. Today, thanks to the Internet, it is easier than ever for someone to become steeped in extremist ideologies, even to the point of being willing to commit acts of great violence, without ever being involved in an organized extremist group. 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.

**Funding CVE – and the Need for a Holistic Approach**

In May, the League expressed concerns about press reports that the administration was proposing to cut funding for its CVE programs entirely.¹¹ And last month, ADL expressed concerns as DHS announced their 2017 two-year CVE funding grantees.¹² Funding for Life After Hate, a successful and in-demand program to de-radicalize neo-Nazis and white supremacists, was not renewed. *Politico* reported that, since Election Day, Life After Hate has seen a twenty-fold increase in requests for help “from people looking to disengage or bystanders/family members looking for help from someone they know.”¹³ At a time when right-wing extremist groups are experiencing rising membership and expanding influence, DHS must invest in community-based organizations that work to counter these groups.

In addition, the 2017 list of CVE grantees¹⁴ indicates a shift in funding focus away from community-based civil society organizations and toward law enforcement agencies. Police play a critical role, but we cannot enforce our way out of this problem. Community-based organizations must help lead this work. These groups are much more likely to have credibility and trust needed to reach the targets of extremists, which include many disaffected or vulnerable youth. The League called on DHS to clarify its funding criteria and demonstrate that it is committed to funding the full range of programs – domestic and international – designed to counter all forms of violent extremism.¹⁵

Importantly, ADL has also strongly advised the administration against focusing its CVE program solely on extremism motivated by radical interpretation of Islam. We responded to press reports¹⁶ that the administration wanted to change the name of the government initiative from “Countering Violent Extremism” to “Countering Islamic Extremism” or “Countering Radical Islamic Extremism” by stating that such a change would be damaging to the American Muslim community and dangerously narrow.¹⁷ Singling out Muslims and the American Muslim community for special scrutiny or suspicion is discriminatory, offensive, ineffective, and counterproductive. In fact, one essential focus of our nation’s CVE programs should be to build trust within American Muslim communities to reduce radicalism, not to further foster mistrust.

This is especially true now, because over the past few months, ADL and others have documented an objectionable, intensified level of anti-Muslim bigotry in a variety of public forums. For example, according to a recent Pew Research Center publication on Muslim Americans place in society released this week,¹⁸ nearly half of Muslims (48%) say they have experienced at least one form of discrimination over the past year. Of those whose appearance is identifiably Muslim, nearly two-thirds (64%) say they have experienced at least one of the

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¹⁴ [https://www.dhs.gov/cvegrants](https://www.dhs.gov/cvegrants)


specific types of discrimination asked about in the survey. Three-quarters (75%) of Muslim respondents say there is “a lot” of discrimination against Muslims in the U.S., with Muslim women more likely than Muslim men to hold this view (83% versus 68%). These findings reinforce an ADL survey on anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim discrimination published this past year.19 Our survey revealed that 89 percent of Muslim Americans are concerned about violence directed at them and Islamic institutions in the U.S., and 64 percent said that they do not believe the government is doing enough to ensure their safety. While most Muslims don’t feel the need to hide their faith, 66 percent said they feel less safe in America since President Trump was elected.

Limiting CVE programs to only focus on Islamic extremism would not only isolate the Muslim American community, but would also exacerbate the problem of how little scrutiny right-wing extremists are receiving.20 At a time when our research indicates that right wing extremists are more visible and emboldened,21 the government should focus on all types of extremism whether it comes from terrorists motivated by extreme interpretations of Islam or white supremacists.

**Relationship with Tech Industry**

As modern technology has provided new fuel for extremists, including using “cyberhate” to attack minorities on social media and coordinate terror attacks more easily, a well-funded CVE program is vital to combat the diverse options extremists have to perpetuate their violence against the American people.

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,22 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.23 The Working Group includes representatives of the Internet industry, civil society, the legal community, and academia. The Working Group input and guidance has been invaluable, and is reflected in a set of Best Practices24 which provide useful and important guideposts for all those willing to join in the effort to address the challenge of cyberhate.

**Conclusion**

We very much hope that these hearings – and any that come after them – will acknowledge and highlight the extraordinary, successful efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement officials to prevent and deter terrorism on our shores since September 11, 2001. But police and

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counterterrorism officials do not work in a vacuum; they cannot do their job without community relationships, trust, community cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility for public safety.

The administration and Congress should do all in its power to promote trust and encourage stronger relationships to counter attempts by international terrorist organizations to recruit disaffected or alienated Americans.

As the Subcommittee and Congress continue to examine the nature of the current threat to our nation, the Anti-Defamation League hopes to play an ongoing, helpful, and constructive role by offering its expertise in documenting the domestic and international terror threats from across the ideological spectrum, while urging members of Congress and other public officials to make every effort to explore this serious issue without creating an atmosphere of blame and suspicion. And ADL will continue to advocate – in Congress and in the courts – for law enforcement officials to have investigative tools sufficient to deter and prevent terrorism, while appropriately balancing national security and individual rights.

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,

Deborah M. Lauter
Senior Vice President
Policy and Programs

Oren Segal
Director
Center on Extremism

Michael Lieberman
Washington Counsel

Policy and Programs
Center on Extremism
Selected ADL Resources on Hate Groups, Terrorism and Extremism

MAJOR REPORTS:

Alt Right to Alt Lite: Naming the Hate (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/from-alt-right-to-alt-lite-naming-the-hate

Despite Internal Turmoil, Klan Groups Persist (June 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/despite-internal-turmoil-klan-groups-persist

A Dark and Constant Rage: 25 Years of Right Wing Terrorism in the United States (May 2017)

Defining Extremism: Glossary of Anti-Government Extremism (June 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary/terms/defining-extremism-anti-government

Defining Extremism: Glossary of White Supremacist Terms, Movements and Philosophies (May 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/glossary/terms/defining-extremism-white-supremacy

Domestic Islamic Extremism Report (March 2017)

White Supremacists on Campus: Unprecedented Recruitment Efforts Underway (March 2017)
https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-on-campus-unprecedented-recruitment-efforts-underway

Murder and Extremism in the United States in 2016 (February 2017)

US Residents Linked to Activity Motivated by Islamic Extremist Ideology in 2016 (November 2016)

White Supremacist Prison Gangs in the US (April 2016)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/white-supremacist-prison-gangs-in-the-united-states


2015 Sees a Dramatic Spike in Islamic Extremism Arrests (March 2016)

Anatomy of a Standoff: The Malheur Refuge Occupation (February 2016)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/anatomy-of-a-standoff

Oath Keepers and Three Percenters Part of Growing Anti-Govt Movement (September 2015)
With Hate in Their Hearts: The State of White Supremacy in the U.S. (July 2015)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/state-of-white-supremacy

Farrakhan: In His Own Words (March 2015)

Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2014 (February 2015)

Hashtag Terror: How ISIS Manipulates Social Media (August 2014)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/reports/isis-islamic-state-social-media

Homegrown Islamic Extremism in 2013 (March 2014)

BACKGROUNDERS:

Backgrounder: Vanguard America (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/vanguard-america

Backgrounder: ACT for America (June 2017)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/profiles/act-for-america

Backgrounder: Alt Right: A Primer About the New White Supremacy (2016)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/alt-right-a-primer-about-the-new-white-supremacy

Backgrounder: Frank Gaffney and the Center for Security Policy (2016)

Backgrounder: Traditionalist Youth Network (Heimbach/Parrott) (2014)
https://www.adl.org/education/resources/backgrounders/traditionalist-youth-network

2017 BLOG POSTS:

Sovereign Citizen Funny Money Not So Humorous for Victims (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/blog/sovereign-citizen-funny-money-not-so-humorous-for-victims

Jewish Voice for Peace: Increasing Anti-Jewish Radicalism (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/blog/jewish-voice-for-peace-increasing-anti-israel-radicalism

Al-Aqsa Aftermath: Analyzing post-Attack Extremist Rhetoric (July 2017)

Colorado White Supremacist Latest to Be Arrested for Attacks on Jewish Institutions (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/blog/colorado-white-supremacist-latest-to-be-arrested-for-attacks-on-jewish-institutions

Analysis of Reddit User Claiming Responsibility for President Trump’s CNN Video (July 2017)
https://www.adl.org/blog/analysis-of-reddit-user-claiming-responsibility-for-president-trumps-cnn-video

Virginia Shooting Underscores Risk of Domestic Terror from Across Ideological Spectrum (June 2017)
ISIS’s New Focus: Incendiary Attacks (January 2017)  
https://www.adl.org/blog/isisss-new-focus-incendiary-attacks

White Supremacists Try to Turn Martin Luther King Jr Day Into James Earl Ray Day (January 2017)  
https://www.adl.org/blog/white-supremacists-try-to-turn-martin-luther-king-jr-day-into-james-earl-ray-day

**COMBATING CYBERHATE:**

Online Harassment: Extremists Ramp Up Trolling, Doxxing Efforts (March 2017)  
https://www.adl.org/blog/online-harassment-extremists-ramp-up-trolling-doxxing-efforts

ADL Best Practices for Responding to Cyberhate  
https://www.adl.org/cyberhate-response

Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter, Yahoo, YouTube and other companies have adopted ADL’s standards for responding to hate online.

Cyber-Safety Action Guide  

To empower any consumer to take action against Internet hate speech, ADL created the guide and an online portal to make it easy for any member of the public to register complaints with the most frequented websites and major social media channels, including AT&T, eBay, Facebook, Google, Instagram, LinkedIn, Pinterest, Twitter, Yahoo and YouTube.

ADL’s Work Combating Cyberhate and Countering Violent Extremists Online  