

Fighting Domestic Terrorism is a Local Law Enforcement Concern
Strategies for Enhancing Community Policing

by

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The Command College Futures Professional Article is a study of a particular emerging issue of relevance to law enforcement. Its purpose is not to predict the future; rather, to project a variety of possible scenarios useful for strategic planning in anticipation of the emerging landscape facing policing organizations.

This article was created using the futures forecasting process of Command College and its outcomes. Defining the future differs from analyzing the past, because it has not yet happened. In this article, methodologies have been used to discern useful alternatives to enhance the success of planners and leaders in their response to a range of possible future environments.

Managing the future means influencing it – creating, constraining and adapting to emerging trends and events in a way that optimizes the opportunities and minimizes the threats of relevance to the profession.

The views and opinions expressed in the professional article are those of the author, and are not necessarily those of the CA Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST).

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Strategies for Enhancing Community Policing

The terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 have changed the landscape of domestic terrorism forever. Prior to 9/11, terrorism occurring in America seldom involved radical jihadi extremists. Most often, the terrorists were associated with anti-government movements, white supremacist groups, eco-terrorists, radical animal rights groups or anti-abortion groups. In fact, the most significant incidence of domestic terrorism occurred on April 19, 1995, in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols planted explosives in a Ryder truck outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building; at 9:02 a.m. local time the subsequent explosion killed 168 people.

This isn't to say that extremist Muslims weren't of concern to the American intelligence and law enforcement communities. In 1993, Ramzi Yousef, an al-Qaeda leader, planned the first bombing of the World Trade Center. The bomb, which was planted in the basement, killed six people and injured more than 1000 others. (Turner, 2003) The death toll of these bombings, however, pale in comparison to the loss of life as a result of the terrorist acts of 9/11. Two thousand nine hundred and seventy-five people were killed on September 11, 2001, when four hijacked airplanes crashed into the trade center, the Pentagon, and a western Pennsylvania field.

Many Americans, local law enforcement officers included, believed at the time that the responsibility of protecting America from terrorism rested primarily with the intelligence communities and law enforcement branches of the federal government. The years since 9/11 have demonstrated that local law enforcement agencies are a powerful

ally in the fight against terror. In fact, many agencies are already employing the basic framework of a successful anti-terrorism strategy. By incorporating a Domestic Security Element to a successful community policing program, local law enforcement will not only maximize their community policing efforts, they will also increase the likelihood of identifying persons planning acts of domestic terror in their communities.

While Americans have been a favorite target of religious extremists since the 1920's, prior to 9/11 there had been few cases of terrorism within the borders of the United States perpetrated by these same extremists. Most often, Americans traveling abroad were targeted by terrorists and were either kidnapped and held captive, as in the case of the 1979 kidnapping of 66 Americans at the U.S. embassy in Tehran, Iran; (as cited in www.infoplease.com) or targeted for murder as in the case of the bombing in 1988 of a New York bound Pam Am 747 airliner over Lockerbie, Scotland killing 259 passengers, including 35 Syracuse University students and many U.S. military personnel. (as cited in www.infoplease.com) Even though foreign-born or foreign-based terrorists will continue to be a significant issue, a great concern should be the sustained presence of homegrown individuals or groups that are capable of committing acts of similar horror.

Leading U.S. intelligence experts have stated repeatedly the number one priority of the American intelligence community is to identify Americans intent on harming America. This strategic goal represents a considerable shift in American focus. (Mulrine, 2011) Deputy National Security Advisor for Homeland Security, John Brennan, has stated, "This is the first counter-terrorism strategy that designates the homeland as a primary area of emphasis in our counter-terrorism efforts." (Rabechault, 2011) One recent incident emphasizes the importance of this goal. On April 30, 2012,

five men claiming to be anarchists were arrested in Cleveland, Ohio for attempting to blow up a bridge spanning the Cuyahoga River in Cuyahoga Valley National Park. The five suspects have no known connections to international terrorist organizations. The motivation for their attempted attack is believed to be their displeasure with corporate America; one of the suspects stated that the Occupy protests had failed to go far enough. (Klein, 2012) Although these suspects were an isolated group, the wired world creates an environment that can easily identify, train and support others.

The proliferation of the Internet has created an environment whereby vulnerable Americans can be influenced by radical Islamic extremists from half a world away. There are al-Qaeda videos on YouTube, music videos from a Somali militia organization, and numerous chat rooms sponsored by Muslim extremists. Al-Qaeda affiliates in Yemen are producing a webzine entitled “Inspire”, which is published in English and appears to be designed primarily as a recruiting tool. (as cited in www.npr.org) There are Facebook pages by Islamic extremists and blogs like the one produced by an organization in New York named “Revolution Muslim”. (as cited in www.npr.org) The group’s stated goals are to create Islamic law within the United States, to destroy Israel, and to take al-Qaeda’s message to the masses. According to the blog’s founder, Yousef al-Khattab, the “RevMuslim” blog boasts 1,500 hits per day. (as cited in www.npr.org)

Perhaps the most infamous homegrown American terrorist is US Army Major Nidal Hassan. On November 5, 2009, Hasan carried out an attack at Fort Hood, Texas. Hasan, who was motivated by an extremist interpretation of the Muslim faith, killed 13 people and wounded 29 others. Hasan had communicated regularly via e-mail with

Anwar al-Awlaki, an American born Muslim cleric and religious leader of al-Qaeda.

Several of the 9/11 hijackers have also been linked to al-Awlaki. (Rabinowitz, 2011)

Since 9/11, more than 200 Americans motivated by Islamic extremists have been arrested and charged for terror related offenses against America. Of the cases identified to this point, 46% have occurred within the last two years. Since 2009, 38 Americans have been documented as having received terrorist related training abroad.

(Knickerbocker, 2011) this shows both that the frequency of incidents is accelerating, and that it is not enough to merely allow state or national agencies to deal with it.

Local law enforcement has become a key component in the fight against terrorism on American soil. Sixty-three percent of the identified terrorist cases have been disrupted by law enforcement at an early stage of the planning or execution. (Knickerbocker, 2011)

There are numerous cases of local law enforcement agencies uncovering an active terrorist cell or an ongoing terrorist plot while conducting an investigation of seemingly unrelated criminal activity. One such case occurred in Torrance, California, when police officers from the Torrance Police Department arrested Levar Washington and Gregory Patterson for robbing a Chevron gas station. A police informant had identified the duo as being responsible for robbing several other gas stations in Los Angeles and Orange County. A subsequent search of their apartment revealed the two suspects, and two others, were members of a radical Islamic organization called Jam'iyat Ul-Islam Is-Saheeh founded by Kevin James while in the California prison system. Also discovered during the search were plans to attack U.S. military bases, Israeli government offices, and Jewish synagogues in the Los Angeles area. It is believed that Washington and Patterson

had been robbing the gas stations to finance their terrorist activities. (as cited in www.adl.org)

The community at large plays an equally important role in protecting America against would be domestic terrorists. A report from a T-shirt vendor to a New York City police officer lead to the arrest of Faisal Shahzad for planting a bomb in a vehicle in Times Square. A retired police officer working in a gun store in Killeen, Texas, provided a tip to local law enforcement that lead to the arrest of AWOL U.S. Army Pfc. Naser Abdo after Abdo acted suspiciously while purchasing smokeless gunpowder, shotgun ammunition, and a semi-automatic pistol magazine. The subsequent investigation revealed that Abdo had planned a Nidal Hasan style attack on the same military base at Fort Hood, Texas. (Stengle, 2011)

Community policing strategies are nothing new. Many law enforcement agencies across America have embraced the idea that effective policing is enhanced with the development of police/community partnerships designed to work together in collaboration to identify and resolve long standing issues that impact safety and quality of life within our communities. Indeed, we are fortunate that an effective model of policing is already in place as it can be enhanced to ensure our communities are protected against domestic terrorism. The best defense against violent extremism is empowered and well-informed families and local communities.

Compelled by ongoing events, the traditional community oriented policing model must continue to evolve. This evolution may very be called a homeland security or domestic security model. According to a 2011 White House statement, the community's awareness of a threat and willingness to work with local police agencies is at the heart of

an effective community policing strategy. (White House Press Release, 2011)

Communities expect that local law enforcement agencies focus not only on traditional policing but must also focus on domestic security in the wake of homegrown terrorism. (Cetron & Davies, 2008) It naturally follows that a modern community-policing model should incorporate a Domestic Security Element.

The Domestic Security Element will involve the development of a comprehensive community action plan that enhances community safety through prevention, intervention and enforcement efforts. It is a collaborative effort involving private citizens; city, county, state and federal government; U.S. Armed services; local community based organizations; mental health professionals; schools; parents; faith based organizations; and local law enforcement. The goal of this work will be to intervene in the lives of those who may be influenced by hate and extremism to provide positive socialization opportunities as alternatives to criminal involvement.

Some of these activities may include the following:

- A commitment to develop relationships with key segments of the local community in advance of a crisis. These communities include:
 - Local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies
 - Significant cultural groups within your jurisdiction
 - Faith based groups, including but not limited to Muslim and Jewish communities
- Developing and/or enhancing School Resource programs targeting high school and junior high schools within your jurisdiction.
 - These programs should minimally include:

- Anti-harassment training
 - Anti-bullying training
 - Education in the identification of extremist behavior and strategies for reporting
- Anti-harassment and anti-bullying programs at the elementary school level, such as the G.R.E.A.T. Program.
- Partnering with the federal government to participate in local task forces and the development of a T.L.O. program within your jurisdiction.
- Obtain available training from the Department of Homeland Security in the identification of extremist behavior and warning signs.
 - This training must be provided not only to the police officers but should incorporate a community education component to increase the likelihood that extremist behavior is recognized and reported. This training may be provided to:
 - High school students, teachers and administrators
 - Faith based organizations
 - Agencies which provide public services
 - Employers and employees of private sector businesses
 - Employers and employees of public sector businesses
- Develop and participate in a network of community programs that provide assistance to new immigrants to assist with their acclimation into your local community.

- Develop and participate in a network of community programs to assist veterans in your jurisdiction. These programs may include assistance with:
 - Re-acclimation to society for newly returning veterans
 - Job counseling and assistance with locating jobs
 - Mental health assistance
 - Substance abuse assistance
 - Provide education and training in the identification of extremist behavior
- Develop a process for seeking state and federal funding sources to support non-profit organizations that provide needed services.
- Partner with the Department of Homeland Security Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties to promote group discussions on policy, practice and procedures.
 - Counter al-Qaeda propaganda that the United States is at war with Islam
 - Provide mechanism for local community members to influence policy
- Host roundtable discussions with young leaders to promote mutual understanding and provide a mechanism for feedback and input.

An effective Domestic Security Element should incorporate activities that build relationships and bridges between individuals and communities. Just as we engage in education programs that counter acts of violence due to gang involvement, domestic violence and other types of violence we must ensure our communities are empowered to

recognize threats of violent extremism and understand the range of government and non-government resources that can keep families, neighborhoods and communities safe.

Homegrown extremists are especially dangerous to America. They are not tracked via their travel, they are familiar with American habits and customs and they have almost unlimited access to high value targets. According to a USA Today Gallup Poll the number of Americans who believe the government should do whatever it takes to protect its citizens from domestic terrorism, even if it means violating civil liberties, has dropped in half since the days of 9/11. (Hampson & Norman, 2011) What this means to law enforcement is that electronic surveillance alone will not be the answer in fighting domestic terrorism.

Law enforcement and local communities must work in collaboration to provide safety and security. The goal must be to develop a broad range of tools and capabilities to fight hate and extremism while relying on the strength of individuals and communities. By expanding the model many communities have incorporated to fight other types of violence local police jurisdictions are better positioned to promote collaborative efforts to fight homegrown terrorism. Additionally, it is likely these efforts will have collateral impacts on overall community health and safety.

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