

**Congresswoman Jane Harman**  
**Opening Statement**  
**“Violent Extremism: How are people moved from**  
**constitutionally-protected thought to acts of terrorism?”**

Ahmed Abdullah Minni was a member of the West Potomac High School wrestling team. His coach described him as “one of the last people” he would expect to turn to terrorism.

Ramy Zamzam, a 22-year-old Howard University dental student was “tolerant and engaging.”

These two young men, along with three workout buddies from the local Gold’s Gym in Fairfax County, were recently arrested in Pakistan allegedly attempting to engage in jihad against U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan.

Their disappearance didn’t raise suspicion until one of the boy’s families found a farewell video soon after and their loved ones frantically contacted the FBI for help in finding them.

And to almost all who knew him, Najibullah Zazi was just the friendly hot dog stand vendor who liked to joke with his customers—not, as it is alleged, an al-Qaeda operative plotting an attack on the New York City transit system.

People didn’t necessarily know what to make of Major Nidal Hasan. But surely no one anticipated that he would carry out the worst domestic terrorist attack since 9/11.

In each of these cases, appearances proved far different from reality.

Today, this Subcommittee seeks to gain understanding of how people who seem like anyone else – those who are capable of interacting socially with friends and colleagues and in many cases are athletes and scholars – could be recruited or self-recruited to train to be terrorists.

My eyes were opened four years ago when a terrorist cell in my district – Torrance, CA – was thwarted by attentive law enforcement. Excellent police work enabled authorities to connect the dots between a series of gas station robberies and plots to attack local synagogues, recruiting offices and a military base.

This isn't new subject-matter for our Subcommittee either. Since early 2007, we have held a series of careful hearings to understand how someone with radical views, which are protected by our constitution, becomes willing to engage in violent behavior – and in some cases, to seek to inflict maximum harm on the maximum number of innocent civilians.

Our earlier efforts have been criticized, and in my view, misunderstood by some civil liberties groups.

We drafted a bill creating a commission to examine and report on what causes an individual like Major Hasan to attack. It passed the House by 404-6 in October 2007. Only then did the ACLU – which had participated in our meetings – object to it.

And many disagreed that such a commission should examine terrorist recruitment on the internet. Yet, press reports suggest that at least one of the five Alexandria men posted online comments praising YouTube videos of attacks on a U.S. Army convoy hit by a roadside bomb in Kabul.

YouTube videos may have inspired them to travel to Pakistan. It also appears that an alleged Taliban recruiter used coded messages and Facebook to communicate with the men.

In his written statement, Mr. Macleod-Ball of the ACLU Washington Office suggests that “protecting our First Amendment freedoms will both honor our values and keep us safe.” Of course we must protect these freedoms, but we also must prevent recruiters from cherry-picking kids from our communities and sending them to become jihadists overseas.

I hope our witnesses can help us to separate the intellectual process of committing to a political agenda (protected by the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment) from the operational process of moving from non-violence to violence (not protected).

We need to be able to intervene to stop individuals in our schools, neighborhoods, religious centers and jails who are persuaded by extreme violent messaging, whether through the internet, friends or mentors to commit violent acts. Before it is too late.

So, what are the triggers?

The number of Americans who are either being recruited or are self-recruiting to carry out terrorist attacks here or abroad is growing.

Recently, numbers of young Somali-Americans were recruited in Minneapolis to join the al-Shabaab terrorist group in Somalia. Their families were stunned. Two have carried out suicide bombings.

And then there's David Headley, the American citizen who has now been indicted for his alleged roles in the Mumbai attacks last year as well as for plotting an attack on a Danish newspaper. This case is doubly important to examine because he was an American recruited to attack abroad.

In both these cases, terrorist organizations not only successfully recruited Americans, but then provided the requisite training to carry out major attacks.

We don't have too many more chances to get this right. If we fail to find the right way to protect security and liberty, the next attack could lead to the shredding of our constitution.

Welcome to all the witnesses. In addition to Michael Macleod-Ball, we will hear from Dr. Stevan Weine ("Wine") of the University of Chicago, Jim Zogby of the Arab American Institute and Kim Cragin of RAND.

All of the Members of this Subcommittee – who took oaths to protect and defend the constitution and to provide for the common defense – look forward to your expert analysis and suggestions for tackling this threat.

Terrorists only have to be right once. We have to try our best to be right 100% of the time.