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Overview of Islamist Extremism in Europe

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Chairman Allen, Senator Biden, members of the Committee: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today about the challenge of Islamist extremism in Europe. I must emphasize from the very beginning that I am not speaking of a challenge posed by the vast number of Muslims living in Europe who, like most Muslims anywhere, have no radical agenda. As President Bush has said, "America treasures the relationship we have with our many Muslim friends, and we respect the vibrant faith of Islam which inspires countless individuals to lead lives of honesty, integrity, and morality." Rather, today I am speaking of the "minuscule minority" who would distort Islam for political ends and defile a noble faith by committing terrorist acts against us or our European allies. In this testimony, I will describe the nature of Islamic extremism in Europe and the factors that drive it. I will conclude with a discussion of what we and our European friends are doing to combat this problem.

Europe's Muslim Population

Europe (including Russia and the states of the South Caucasus) is home to over 120 million Muslims. Over half of these live in Turkey, a key partner in our effort to counter extremism, with its secular democracy, predominantly Muslim population, and 80-year experience with modernizing reforms. Significant Muslim populations are also present in the Balkans, Russia and Azerbaijan. Within the Balkans, Albania and Kosovo have predominantly Muslim populations, while Bosnia is 40 percent Muslim and a considerable Muslim minority has lived in Bulgaria and Macedonia for hundreds of years. In Russia, the Muslim population, including immigrants from Central Asia, is growing faster than non-Muslims, however most are non-practicing. Militant extremists have been active in Chechnya and have tried to co-opt the secessionist movement or Chechen attitudes, which do not generally subscribe to the extremist agenda. Azerbaijan has a chance to emerge as a secular democracy that has a predominantly Shiia population. Approximately 15-20 million Muslims live in Western Europe.

While Islamist extremism is a global phenomenon, we find the nature of the problem in Western Europe to be distinct – both in its character and in its potential to threaten the United States. Many, perhaps most Muslims in Western Europe are outside the mainstream in several respects. They are a minority, and even the third generation is still predominantly viewed as "foreign." Muslims' struggles with unemployment, discrimination, and integration have created an audience potentially open to receiving an extremist message. In many countries, this is compounded by legal institutions that struggle with the challenge of free speech that is exploited by extremists, thus leading to the phenomenon sometimes called "tolerance of intolerance." Add a

deeply negative perception of U.S. foreign policy among Western Europe's Muslims, and relative freedom of movement across the Atlantic, and you have a particularly dangerous mix. Therefore, while this testimony makes reference to countries farther east, our main focus today is on Western Europe.

Muslims in Western Europe comprise only about five percent of the total population. However, this number has tripled over the last 30 years, and is expected to double again by 2025. The most common areas of origin are Turkey, North Africa, and Pakistan. The countries with the most Muslims are France (over 5 million), Germany (over 3 million), the UK (2 million), Italy (over 1 million), and The Netherlands (950,000). Western European Muslims are generally characterized by isolated diasporas, for example, Algerians or Moroccans in France, Turks in Germany, South Asians in the UK, and Moroccans in Spain. The vast majority of Western European Muslims are either mainstream followers who only wish to practice their religion in peaceful coexistence with their neighbors, or are relatively non-practicing.

The Extremist Minority

Extremists comprise a very small minority of Muslims living in Europe, with only one to two percent of Western Europe's Muslims involved in any kind of extremist activity. Of these, only a small fraction has the potential to cross the critical threshold into terrorism. Still, a mere handful of extremists can carry out a devastating terrorist attack.

Pockets of Islamic extremists exist in a broad range of European countries. Some mujahideen who fought in the Bosnian war remained in Bosnia after the fighting, acquiring citizenship and propagating anti-Western interpretations of Islam that run counter to the country's secular traditions. With U.S. urging, the Bosnian Parliament recently enacted legislation that strengthens the government's authorities to de-naturalize foreign-born fighters that fraudulently obtained citizenship during and after the war. But Islamic extremism remains a threat in Bosnia and beyond. And of course it exists in many European cities. In Germany, a small group of radical Islamist students led by Egyptian immigrant Mohammed Atta plotted the September 11 attacks from an apartment in Hamburg.

A variety of transnational groups seek to spread extremism across Europe by claiming to be non-violent and moderate, while appealing to the idealism of socially alienated and/or spiritually hungry Muslims in Europe. One such group is Hizb ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation). Founded in the Palestinian territories in the 1950's, Hizb ut-Tahrir is secretive, organized around cells of 4 or 5 people. Its European headquarters is in London, from which it transmits a hateful, anti-Semitic and anti-American call for the overthrow, albeit non-violent, of existing governments and the reestablishment of a single Islamist theocracy (or Caliphate). While it claims to be non-violent, Hizb ut-Tahrir's websites have deemed justified the killing of Americans or Jews, and even the flying of airplanes into office buildings. Germany banned Hizb ut-Tahrir in 2003 for urging violence against Jews. The UK is now instituting a similar ban, and recently prohibited Hizb ut-Tahrir's splinter group, the radical youth movement Al-Muhajiroun. We lack evidence of Hizb ut-Tahrir having organized terrorist actions, but we know it skillfully uses Western freedoms to provide the ideological foundation for Islamist terrorists.

Other groups operating in Western Europe more actively blur the distinction between non-violent extremism and terrorism. These include the Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC), which seeks to overthrow the Algerian government and institute an Islamic state, and the Moroccan Islamic Combatant Group (GICM), which has similar aims in Morocco.

At the outright terrorist end of Europe's continuum of Islamist extremist groups is al Qaida. Since al Qaida's structure and training camps were destroyed in Afghanistan following September 11, al Qaida and its affiliates have claimed responsibility for several terrorist acts on European soil. In some cases, attacks appear to have been carried out by terrorists who are inspired by al Qaida rather than tied to a central leadership structure. These include the double suicide bombings in Istanbul in November 2003 that killed 57 people, the March 2004 attacks on four trains in Madrid that killed 191 commuters, and the London subway and bus bombings that killed 52 in July of last year. With its extremist message and multiple, highly visible attacks, al Qaida has inspired a global movement that has spawned other small, non-aligned groups, some operating in Europe. One example is The Netherlands-based Hofstad Group, a cell of Islamist militants, mostly second-generation Muslims of North African ancestry.

In November 2004, Hofstad's leader, a 27-year-old Dutch Muslim of Moroccan descent named Mohammed Bouyeri, murdered filmmaker Theo Van Gogh on the street in Amsterdam.

We and our European allies are vigilant concerning the potential consequences of the insurgency in Iraq on European Muslim populations, but to date there have been only a handful of European-residing Muslims who have gone to become foreign fighters. A November 2004 suicide bomb attack in Baghdad was perpetrated by a young man from near Paris. We also know that Western Europe has served as a stopover point for radical fighters wounded in Iraq. Spanish court papers show that, as early as February 2002, Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was laying out plans for a pipeline to send European recruits to Iraq in one direction, and recruiters to Europe in the other. Since June 2005, Spanish police have broken up three networks dedicated to sending suicide bombers to Iraq. Prior to the Iraq war, extremists traveled from Western Europe to enlist in Bosnia, Afghanistan or Chechnya.

The Causes of Islamist Extremism

Secular Alienation

A variety of factors is driving Islamist extremism in Europe by creating a sense of alienation from mainstream, secular society in Europe. These include: demographics; high rates of poverty and unemployment; anti-Muslim discrimination and racism; a strict adherence by many Muslims to the language and traditions of their countries of origin; and issues of identity. In addition, a general opposition to U.S. and Western policies in the Middle East, including support for Israel and the operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, has given focus to Islamist extremism and helped increase its attractiveness among Europe's alienated Muslim population.

Poverty and a lack of jobs create a pool of disaffected Muslims from which extremists can draw recruits. In the 1950s and 60s, when the European economy was growing faster than the local populations, the need for additional unskilled labor skyrocketed. Guest workers were recruited en masse, initially from then-poorer countries of southern Europe, and later mostly from Turkey and North Africa. They came largely from rural backgrounds and had little education. This wave of predominantly Muslim legal immigrants was followed by a large influx of illegal immigrants seeking the promise for a better life in Europe. After several successful decades of earning enough to support themselves and send money back home, economic slowdown in Europe coupled with large-scale family reunification and high birth rates led to rising unemployment. Over time, minorities increasingly found themselves segregated, living in poor neighborhoods, and holding low-paying jobs with little room for advancement. European Muslims tend to have lower levels of education, higher rates of unemployment, and lower incomes than the general population across Europe, even in countries such as the UK, which have more stringent anti-discrimination laws.

This lack of opportunity is compounded by employment discrimination and, at times, racism from native populations. We Americans are familiar with these problems from our own history. While racial, ethnic and religious discrimination is officially banned across Europe, Muslims routinely find themselves turned down for jobs, particularly in the service industry. This is true for second- and third-generation children of immigrants as well as first-generation workers who may have language barriers or lack adequate training for certain jobs. There are few opportunities for these Muslims to interact with or learn about Muslims in the West who are successful and have found a balance between living in a Western country and practicing Islam. Further, many of these immigrants lack support networks to help them integrate into their societies. The 2005 civil unrest in France brought to light the immense frustration shared by young, unemployed and disaffected minorities living in the Paris suburbs, many of whom are second- or third-generation children of immigrants.

Muslims are severely underrepresented in Europe's national parliaments and governments, as well as at the municipal level. However, there are some signs that political participation among European Muslims is increasing. For example, in local elections last month in The Netherlands, a record number of Muslims went to the polls and elected immigrants to various city councils, demonstrating that immigrants are seeking change through healthy, democratic means.

Poverty, lack of education, and anti-immigrant discrimination alone do not create extremists; alienation does. Alienation and radicalization are phenomena related to urbanization, education, cultural uprooting and isolation, and the combinations

of communications technology with literacy on a historically isolated, traditional culture. Many extremists are poor; but poverty is not a requirement for radicalization. Ahmed Omar Saeed Sheikh, the Briton of Pakistani descent who was convicted for the kidnapping and murder of journalist Daniel Pearl, attended private schools and studied at the London School of Economics. In fact, many militant extremists come from the first generation of educated European Muslims, often with technical training. Most are men. But Muslim women can also become extremists, often exposed to radical ideology by their husbands. Muriel Degauque, a 38-year-old Belgian woman from a troubled background, conducted a suicide bomb attack in Baquba, Iraq, in November 2005; her family claimed she had been “brainwashed” by her Moroccan husband. We have also seen non-Muslim, European-born converts to radical Islam, such as convicted “shoe bomber” Richard Reid, who was born in London to an English mother and a Jamaican father, and converted to Islam while in prison in his early 20s. The majority of Europe’s Muslim extremists do not have a madrassa education or a background in Middle East conflicts, but all share the same sense of being marginalized by society.

Spiritual Alienation

We believe that marginalized European Muslims who cross the threshold to extremism are also driven by a sense of spiritual alienation. Less concerned than were their parents with economic survival, many of Europe’s second- and third-generation Muslims seem to long for spiritual fulfillment. But many times their parents are unable to provide cultural or spiritual guidance, while their communities may lack imams with a modern, democratic orientation. Foreign financiers and religious activists often fill this spiritual vacuum by building local mosques and supplying them with extremist imams. Disconnected from often tolerant traditions of their families’ original homelands, these second- and third-generation Muslims are susceptible to foreign propaganda and sermons that preach narrow and hateful interpretations of Islam.

The Tolerance of Intolerance Trap

Many European governments hesitate to take action against extremist preaching in the name of defending religious tolerance and free speech. They often fear that crackdowns will only drive radical elements underground. Extremists take advantage of European freedoms to proselytize and recruit from radical mosques and they have taken over several major mosques. In the early 2000s, London’s Finsbury Park Mosque was attended by Algerian-born UK citizens loyal to Chechen Shamil Basayev, who claimed responsibility for the September 2004 Beslan school attack in Russia. In February 2006 a judge sentenced the mosque’s former imam, Abu Hamza al-Masri, to prison for inciting followers to kill non-Muslims. French citizen Zacarias Moussaoui attended London’s Brixton Mosque for a time but was eventually expelled for exposing younger members to his extremist views. Brixton was also attended by “shoe bomber” Richard Reid. Mohammed Atta and other Hamburg Cell members began attending Hamburg’s Al-Quds Mosque in late 1997.

The European debate can fall into a trap of seeking a defensive solution, such as formulas to define and ban hate speech. These kinds of legal bans may well be a dead end. A better solution is to develop norms that challenge and expose extremist thought as with other forms of anti-democratic ideology.

Failed Integration Models

The two most common models of integration, assimilation and multiculturalism, have proven difficult to implement in Europe. Assimilation, the approach taken by France, seeks to counter alienation by minimizing cultural or religious differences and forging a national identity, based on common citizenship. This approach has strong arguments in its favor, in principle. In practice, it has proven difficult to implement. The policy generated France’s controversial “headscarf law,” which bans the wearing of conspicuous religious symbols in public schools. Many Muslims believe their needs are often ignored, and, in fact, they often believe themselves to be pushed to the margins of society.

Multiculturalism, the approach taken by The Netherlands and the UK, acknowledges the cultural, religious and racial diversity of a nation’s citizens. This approach also has theoretical merits. In practice, however, multiculturalism has not eliminated, as it intended, elements of xenophobia, racism and anti-Islamism in mainstream society. The alienation of Muslim populations has persisted. Shaken by the 2004 murder of filmmaker Theo Van Gogh by an Islamist extremist, The Netherlands is now reassessing multiculturalism and pressing its immigrants to adopt “Dutch values” if they wish to attain residency. In the UK, the July 7, 2005, bus and subway bombings are leading to a rejection of multiculturalism and a questioning of British society’s approach

to integration.

Most countries in Europe have not pursued a conscious integration policy. Until recently, mainstream Europeans viewed Muslim immigrants as guest workers who would someday go “home.” This leads to Europe’s third-generation Muslim being seen as “foreign,” despite being born in Europe, as were their parents. Again, given our history, and even our current debates about illegal immigration, Americans must be careful and modest in assessing others’ efforts to deal with challenges of national identity in multi-ethnic and multi-religious states.

Extremist Recruitment

The recruitment of alienated European Muslims into extremist networks is a “bottom-up” process. Just as the Islamist movement is largely a loose, non-hierarchical, global network of disaffected radicals, there is also no real structure or process for enlisting recruits in a conventional military sense. Often, prospective terrorists undergo a process of “self-radicalization” by seeking out extremist mentorship among friends and acquaintances, or over the Internet.

Much of the recruitment also occurs in mosques. Self-selected radicals begin attending a radical mosque, eventually find each other, and start forming friendships among small groups. As a fledgling extremist group grows more fervent, less-committed individuals are weeded out, and the most hard-core members leave the mosques for more covert meeting places, including private homes, which are less likely to be under surveillance. While radical elements are still present in some mosques, they have become less attractive as recruiting venues in the wake of September 11 and the subsequent attacks on European soil, because extremists suspect that mosques are being closely monitored.

Extremist recruiters also seek out vulnerable second- and third-generation Muslim youths in their neighborhoods. The recruiter, who is likely a few years older, takes the younger ones under his wing, organizing bonding activities like camping trips and sporting events. He gradually isolates the recruits from their families and steps into the role of mentor. In this newfound clique, young recruits find the social integration and spiritual meaning they have yearned for, radicalism intensifies, and bonds tighten around a shared worldview.

Another site of extremist recruitment is the European prison system. For example, at least one-half of France’s prison population is believed to be Muslim. According to a recent study by the French Interior Ministry, radical Muslims are actively trying to convert other prisoners in approximately one of three French prisons. Despite the large Muslim population in French prisons, only seven percent of prison chaplains are Muslim. Religion is one of the few sanctioned outlets for passing time and forming connections among inmates. In an effort to tamp down the surge in extremist preaching behind bars, in September 2005 the French Council for the Muslim Faith (CFCM) named a Moroccan-born moderate the first national Muslim chaplain for prisons; nominations for other Muslim chaplains are forthcoming. In Spain, police are aware of significant extremist recruitment efforts among the 7,000 Muslim prisoners in that country. One such prison-based cell, indicted two weeks ago, had prepared plans to bomb Spain’s National Court. A series of petty crimes committed in his early 20s led “shoe bomber” Richard Reid to London’s Feltham Young Offenders’ Institution in London. There, he converted to Islam and was radicalized before being released. In the early 2000s, Jamal Ahmidan, a young non-practicing Muslim Moroccan living in Spain, became radicalized in a Spanish prison where he was serving for petty criminal offenses. After his release, Ahmidan ultimately joined the cell that perpetrated the Madrid train bombings.

Cultural and ethnic associations with particular Muslims in the Middle East further the impression of hostility by the West against disenfranchised Muslims in Western Europe. Conflicts in Chechnya, Afghanistan, Iraq and the Middle East provide fuel for extremist recruiters, who portray these conflicts as an assault on Muslim religion, culture and society.

The European and U.S. Response

The transatlantic community has a deep and legitimate interest in the outcome of the “battle of ideas” between moderate and extremist voices in the Muslim world, including in Europe. Those few radicals that cross over into terrorism pose a grave danger to

the United States, as well as Europe and the rest of the world. Responsibility to address the extremist trend also rests with the legitimate Muslim leadership. Healing the rifts within the Muslim community as well as outlining precisely what the extremists want will go a long way to de-legitimizing radicals who interpret Islamic principles in ways that support violence.

The United States cooperates closely with our European allies on counterterrorism measures, such as cutting off terrorist finances, intelligence sharing, law enforcement, and aviation and port security, including through formal working groups with the UK, France and Russia. But we must also intensify our efforts to counter the extremist ideas that drive Islamist terrorism. Defeating extremism requires us to work with our allies to connect European Muslims with the cultures of their adopted countries and fend off extremist recruiters. It also requires us to demonstrate through our own nation's experience that Muslims can be patriotic, democratic and religious at the same time. It is not one or the other. Using examples of a minority population of Muslims in our country, India, and other nations, we can help European Muslims who feel left out understand that it is possible to balance religious identity and European identity.

European leaders are devoting more energy to integrating Muslim communities into the secular mainstream, with a focus on economic development, job creation, and improved social services. While this is appropriate and necessary, it does not go far enough, as many European leaders recognize. For European Muslims to believe they are full members of society, both the majority and minority populations need to better understand and respect each other. Prejudice and discrimination need to be countered. At the same time, we need to bolster moderate voices and appreciation for democracy in Muslim communities as part of a greater effort by minorities to fulfill the obligations of living in a Western country. Achieving these goals will require a difficult discussion within European societies, similar to our own debate over civil rights and diversity. Drawing from the lessons of the U.S. civil rights experience, which is still a work in progress, Europe has a chance to meld the positive aspects of various integration approaches. In this way European Muslims would be viewed as wholly European even while retaining some of the values of their "original" cultures.

European governments are not passive. Last year, Azouz Begag was appointed France's first Minister Delegate for the Promotion of Equal Opportunity, and a High Authority for the Fight Against Discrimination and for Equal Opportunity was created. The UK created several committees, with a mixture of government and Muslim members, to improve dialogue and explore concrete measures. The Dutch government launched a comprehensive program for empowerment and integration. All of these initiatives are in their early stages, and have had mixed reactions from both majority and minority observers, but it is a beginning.

At the same time, the United States is taking its own initiatives. One of our main goals is to improve European Muslims' understanding of the United States and deepen their appreciation for our relative success in achieving integration. To this end, we use exchange programs and innovative outreach efforts at our Embassies. By dispelling misperceptions about the United States, these programs may help us secure the trust of Europe's Muslim populations.

Many foreign policy professionals regard exchanges as our single most effective public diplomacy mechanism. These programs were, without doubt, one of our most potent tools during the Cold War, as Eastern European alumni frequently stress. Our two flagship exchange programs are the Fulbright academic exchange, which brings visiting students and scholars to the United States and sends Americans overseas for study and research, and the International Visitor Leadership Program, which brings emerging leaders to the United States for several weeks.

Our Assistant Secretary for Educational and Cultural Affairs, Dina Powell, attended a symposium last November with government officials and Fulbright Commission representatives from Denmark, France, Germany, The Netherlands, Spain, and the UK. They discussed ways to expand our exchanges into non-traditional communities, and increase diversity in exchanges in European nations with significant Muslim and other minority populations. We have also launched pilot projects with several Western European bi-national Fulbright Commissions to build bridges to Muslim communities. Additionally, we are developing programs to prepare Muslims and other minorities to compete successfully, given that only small numbers of Muslim students in Europe reach the level of university study that could lead to a Fulbright grant. Our outreach efforts have resulted in more minority applications from The Netherlands and the UK. We are also developing initiatives that would reach future

secondary school teachers from minority communities in Germany and young student leaders from six European countries with large Muslim and other minority communities.

We are also increasing the number of Muslims participating in International Visitor Leadership Programs (IVLP). The Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs and the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs jointly designed a Muslim incentive program for FY-06 to encourage selected West European posts to nominate more Muslims for the IVLP on all topics. In FY-05 the first all-Muslim European Regional IVLP was very successful, and such programs continue to attract nominees across the European region. In February of this year, we hosted a regional group comprised of young Muslim leaders, including nine participants from Western Europe, the Balkans, and Turkey. A second group, under the title "Managing Diversity in a Multi-Ethnic Society," brought to the United States more than a dozen nongovernmental organization (NGO) leaders, officials, journalists and academics from a variety of backgrounds.

We also help improve understanding of the United States through a network of educational advising centers, which help attract thousands of Europeans who pursue university study in the United States each year. More than 12,000 students from Turkey attend U.S. universities annually, which is the most of any country in Europe. Such programs can have an important impact in Europe and in the broader Muslim world.

Active and innovative outreach by our European Embassies also helps to build bridges among Americans, European minorities, and European governments. U.S. Ambassador to Belgium Tom Korologos, who is a witness on the next panel, pioneered one such effort last November. Embassy Brussels co-sponsored a conference that brought together American and Belgian Muslims and other representatives from both societies to discuss Muslim identity, civic life, economic opportunity, media portrayal, youth development, and women's issues. The conference spawned dialogue and forged relationships on a personal level among people from all walks of life who deal with issues of Islam and integration on a daily basis. Our Embassy in Slovenia recently held a similar conference. In May, our Embassy in Rome is co-hosting an international seminar addressing models of Islamic integration in Europe and the United States. Other embassies are considering similar events. We could advance these efforts by arranging discussions among American and European Muslims to exchange shared stories, compare concepts of identity and faith, and clarify the varying experiences of European Muslims from varying ethnic backgrounds.

Several of our Embassies are working innovatively with host governments, civil society, and the business community to share our experience with integrating immigrants and minorities into our mainstream society. We are finding a growing receptivity among European mayors and other officials to listen to thoughtful explorations of our own past, stressing our own long struggles and ultimate relative success in fostering "tolerant integration." In The Netherlands, our Consulate General in Amsterdam consults with local police and community leaders on efforts to connect at-risk Muslim youth with Dutch society and thus, resist extremist recruiters. Our Embassy in The Hague has launched a speaker series with veterans of the civil rights movement, who help Dutch municipal officials and Muslim community leaders better understand our experience with anti-discrimination law, justice, affirmative action, and grassroots activism. Our Ambassador to Denmark is supporting a Danish initiative that uses basketball to build cross-cultural connections between Muslim and non-Muslim youth. In addition, his visit to a bazaar in a Muslim area highlighted our embassy's focus on promoting tolerance and understanding. Our embassies in Denmark and The Netherlands are partnering with the local American Chambers of Commerce to launch an internship program for minority youth with the threefold aim of anchoring young Muslims in the mainstream economy, affording them a sense of hope and pride in their European and Muslim identities, and fostering tolerance among European business leaders for their Muslim co-workers and neighbors. The business community can also do more to help in this important effort. We should encourage the many successful Muslim businesspeople in Europe and the United States to share their success stories more publicly and to serve as role models.

Traditional public speaking events and media outreach reinforce the above efforts. As part of our U.S. Speakers and Citizen Dialogue programs, we send both Muslim and non-Muslim American experts as well as Embassy officers to speak to students and community groups throughout Europe. When traveling to Europe, my deputies and I make a point of meeting with Muslim community leaders. Our Ambassadors and press officers do interviews and contribute opinion pieces to newspapers, and

help counter disinformation and conspiracy theories that propagate among Muslim communities on satellite television and the Internet.

The Danish cartoons controversy vividly illustrates the divide between European Muslims and the broader societies in which they live. Thankfully in Europe the protests, demonstrations, and other reactions connected with the cartoons were mostly peaceful, although there were threats against the newspaper and at least one report of a violent attack against a Muslim in response to the controversy. We encourage dialogue, respect and tolerance in our public statements and in our conversations with government officials, Muslim leaders and the media. We defend the right of free expression, including the right to publish drawings of the Prophet, but this right carries a responsibility, and gratuitously offensive publications do not advance the cause of press freedom. To reconcile the conflicting views that publication of these cartoons generated, we call upon representatives of all of Europe's communities, secular and religious, to emphasize and build on the common ground they share: respect for religion and freedom of expression. We do not believe that there is, or needs to be, a fundamental clash in Europe between these two ideals.

Countering Extremist Recruiters

European governments are trying to stymie extremist recruiters who prey on young, vulnerable Muslims whose political and economic alienation, coupled with their lack of contact with their own Muslim cultures, stimulate an identity crisis. Left unchecked, this identity crisis can translate into a spiritual vacuum, which extremist recruiters fill with their own, narrow interpretations of Islam via the Internet and direct interaction. Both American and European government (non-Muslim) officials lack theological knowledge, credibility, and legal authority to influence religious thinking. This is not our job in any event. But we can have a positive impact on political thinking by embracing and cooperating with partners among European Muslims who share our desire for tolerance to triumph over extremism.

A reliable way to counter European Muslims' spiritual alienation may be to anchor them in their own traditions of honor, respect, diversity and tolerance. This requires careful work in the countries from which second- and third-generation immigrants' families emigrated, identifying partners who will reinforce local traditions of tolerance. In the rough Amsterdam neighborhood that was home to the murderer of Theo Van Gogh, local police bring a group of Muslim boys each year to volunteer at an orphanage in their families' native Morocco. The boys often return from such trips with a new recognition of their Muslim identity, and a sense of pride in their adopted European homeland.

Most government officials are just learning to identify extremists who cloak themselves in tolerant rhetoric. The Governments of France and the Netherlands are trying to counter extremist recruiters through local training of imams. In both countries, institutes are being set up to train imams in local languages, history and democratic values. Dutch officials are looking for ways to work with Turkish community leaders and embassy officials to draw on Turkey's successful experience in training imams who reinforce traditions of secular democracy and tolerant faith. Such efforts could be expanded to secular and religious schools in Morocco and Algeria, provided reliable partners can be identified.

U.S. Missions encourage Europeans to treat Islam as a co-equal religion. This will help to undermine the extremist message that Muslims are not welcome in Europe. Our embassies sponsor Iftar dinners and inter-faith dialogue. Consistent with our philosophy that Muslims should be treated as mainstream members of the societies in which they live, we strive to integrate them in our exchange programs along with non-minority citizens. We can do more. The Europeans could provide or ease the establishment of Muslim cemeteries (a municipal function in many European countries), add Muslim chaplains in the military and in prisons, and organize cultural exhibitions of the Muslim traditions of Turkey, Morocco, Algeria, and Pakistan. Working with our European Allies, we might also identify partners among European Muslims who are willing to sponsor moderate Islamic scholarship and transparent charities to counter extremists' inroads in Europe's poor Muslim communities.

Finally, we also need to expand training of U.S. officials posted abroad to understand the cultural context and motivations of European Muslims. We will need additional funding to expand our training programs, as well as the outreach programs outlined above.

Mr. Chairman, Senator Biden, members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to speak before you today. I look forward to your questions, and to working with you on this complex issue.

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