

Congressional Hypocrisy on Extremism

On March 11, 2011, the chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Homeland Security Committee and Republican congressman from New York, Peter T. King, began a hearing on the “radicalization” of American Muslims. Titled “The Extent of Radicalization in the American Muslim Community and that Community’s Response,” the hearing was the twenty-third on such a topic, following a long line of similar hearings held by both Republicans and Democrats during the past five years.

Why stop at having hearings about Islamic extremism? Why not have hearings about other forms of extremism? Mr. King’s answer to that is that U.S. Attorney General Eric H. Holder Jr. “is not saying he’s staying awake at night because of what’s coming from anti-abortion demonstrators or coming from environmental extremists or from Neo-Nazis. It’s the radicalization right now in the Muslim community.”¹ My response: Mr. Holder should be concerned about these other groups, and so should Mr. King.

Neo-Nazi Activities in the Past Two Years

In his opening statement, Mr. King says: “The Department of Homeland Security and [the Homeland Security Committee] were formed in response to the al Qaeda attacks of 9/11. There is no equivalency of threat between al Qaeda and neo-Nazis, environmental extremists or other isolated madmen. Only al Qaeda and its Islamist affiliates in this country are part of an international threat to our nation. Indeed by the Justice Department’s own record not one terror related case in the last two years involved neo-Nazis, environmental extremists, militias or anti-war groups.”²

If Congressman King conducted more thorough research, he would see that his assertion that “not one terror related case in the last two years involved neo-Nazis” is false. On March 9, 2001, two days before the hearings began, Kevin Harpham, allegedly a one-time member of the neo-Nazi National Alliance, was arrested for planting a sophisticated bomb along the route of a march honoring Martin Luther King Jr. in Spokane, Washington.³ According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Mr. Harpham was a frequent poster on the message boards of the white supremacist website the Vanguard News Network, and once allegedly wrote, “Those who say you can’t win a war by bombing have never tried.”⁴

Neo-Nazi Recruitment

¹ Emi Kolawole and Scott Wilson, *Congressman King defends himself against criticism over hearings on radical Islam*. The Washington Post. March 7, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/06/AR2011030603598.html>

² <http://www.observer.com/2011/politics/peter-king-delivers-opening-remarks-packed-hearing>

³ William Yardley, *Suspect Charged in Attempted MLK Day Bombing*. The New York Times. March 9, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/10/us/10bomb.html>

⁴ *Suspect in attempted bombing at MLK Day parade pleads not guilty*. CNN. March 24, 2011. Retrieved from <http://edition.cnn.com/2011/CRIME/03/23/washington.mlk.day.bomb/>

Mr. King indicated that “Al Qaeda is actively targeting the American Muslim community for recruitment,” and therefore the hearing is necessary to address this “dangerous trend.” By wrongfully dismissing that there had been no neo-Nazi terror related cases in the last two years, Mr. King is also ignoring the fact that neo-Nazis are, and have for many years, been actively recruiting as well. On March 16, 2011, Portland local news reported a story of how leaders of the American National Socialist Party, a white supremacist group, distributed hundreds of flyers in hopes of recruiting new members in a Bonita Springs, Florida, neighborhood. In 2004, neo-Nazi Panzerfaust Records began a mass distribution of 100,000 hate-music CDs targeted at white teenagers in hopes of not only “entertain[ing] racist kids,” but “creat[ing] them.” In 2003, the US Army Criminal Investigation Division advised the FBI of six active-duty soldiers at Fort Riley, Texas, who were affiliated with the Aryan Nations.⁵ One of the six sought to recruit members from within the military. In 2007, a North Carolina-based skinhead group expressed interest in recruiting persons with military backgrounds to engage in a “racial holy war” and considered purchasing property to conduct training in weapons, tactics, interrogations, and survival skills. In 2009, the Department of Homeland Security released an unclassified report expressing concern that rightwing extremists would attempt to recruit and “radicalize returning veterans in order to boost their violent capabilities.”⁶

Christian extremism

On March 30, 2010, nine members of a Christian militia group, the Hutaree, were indicted for plotting to spark an uprising and levy war against the U.S. government by killing police.⁷ It was alleged they planned to kill a police officer in Michigan and then stage a second attack on the funeral using landmines and roadside bombs. Members of the Hutaree are described as “Christian warriors” and their now-defunct website said the group is “preparing for the end time battles to keep the testimony of Jesus Christ alive.”

Members of Army of God (AOG), a Christian anti-abortion organization that sanctions the use of force to combat abortion in the United States, have committed numerous domestic terrorist attacks in the US since at least 1985. These are just a summary of the most widely known:

- 1985: three AOG members were arrested and charged with planting bombs at seven abortion clinics in Maryland, Virginia and Washington.

⁵ “White Supremacist Recruitment of Military Personnel since 9/11.” Page 7. July 7, 2008. Retrieved from <http://cryptome.org/spy-whites.pdf>

⁶ “Rightwing Extremism: Current Economic and Political Climate Fueling Resurgence in Radicalization and Recruitment.” Page 3. April 7 2009. Retrieved from http://www.rogerhedgecock.com/resources/HSA_RightwingExtremism_Report_april2009.pdf

⁷ Alex Kellogg, Lauren Etter, Keith Johnson, and Timothy Martin, *Militia Chief's Mistrust Festered, Friends Say*. *The Wall Street Journal*. March 31, 2010. Retrieved from http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304739104575154041322442962.html?mod=WSJ_hpp_LEFTTopStories

- 1992-1993: Rachelle “Shelley” Shannon, a member of AOG, set fire to nine abortion clinics in Oregon, California, Idaho and Nevada. In 1993, she shot abortion-provider Dr. George Tiller in both arms.
- 1994: Paul Jennings Hill, who had connections to AOG and “was thoroughly involved in the creation of [AOG’s website about him],” murdered clinic doctor, Dr. John Britton, and his bodyguard.
- 1997: AOG claimed responsibility for bombings at a gay nightclub and a clinic where abortions were performed in Atlanta.
- 1998: James Kopp assassinated abortion-provider Dr. Barnett Slepian with a single gunshot.⁸ He is suspected in similar shootings in Rochester, New York, and three Canadian cities from 1994 to 1997. Mr. Kopp is a member of AOG.
- 2001: Clayton Lee Wagner, also a member of AOG, mailed more than 300 anthrax threat letters to reproductive health clinics on the East Coast. Each letter contained a white powdery substance that tested negative for anthrax and was signed “Army of God-Virginia Dare Cell.”
- 2003: Stephen John Jordi, who was associated with AOG, was arrested for plotting to attack several abortion clinics. He had identified numerous Miami-area abortion clinics and purchased several items to carry out the attack before he was arrested.
- 2009: Scott Roeder, who was affiliated with AOG, assassinated Dr. Tiller. AOG hails Mr. Roeder as an “American hero.”

Eco-terrorism and animal rights extremism

In 2008, the FBI released an article designating eco-terrorists, specifically Earth Liberation Fund (ELF), and animal rights extremists, specifically Animal Liberation Fund (ALF), as two of the most serious domestic terrorism threats in the U.S. today due to the sheer volume of their crimes (over 2,000 since 1979) and the huge economic impact (losses of more than \$110 million since 1979).⁹ For example, in 2009, members of ELF claimed they toppled two radio station towers near Seattle because of health and environmental concerns. In 2008, members of ELF claimed they destroyed or severely damaged by fire five luxury homes also near Seattle because they viewed the homes as ruining suburban Seattle wetlands. In 2009, the Animal Agriculture Alliance published a press release stating that attacks on the global food

⁸ <http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/facts-and-figures-2010-2011/investigative-programs>

⁹ http://www.fbi.gov/news/stories/2008/june/ecoterror_063008

chain from animal rights and environmental extremists jumped 42% from 155 in 2007 to 220 in 2008.¹⁰ Claimed attacks on food retailers in the U.S. from groups like ALF exploded 377%.¹¹

Terrorism and the implication of race

It is hard to ignore the fact that members of the Hutaree, AOG, neo-nazi organizations and all the infamous members of ELF and ALF are White and most Muslims are of racial minorities. This and the twenty-two previous hearings are simply the U.S. Congress riding the wave of anti-Muslim sentiments among the general public. While religious discrimination is troubling, anti-Muslim mentality seems particularly troubling because it also brings in the question of race. Why do a few Muslim extremists result in labeling the entire religion as radical while the Scott Roeders and James Koppes of the world do not lead Congress to conduct a Congressional hearing on Christian extremism? Would we fear all Muslims if they looked like Scott Roeder? I am tempted to answer no in light of all the incidences of terrorism conducted by White Christian extremists and eco-terrorists being ignored by Congress right now.

To avoid the appearance of targeting a religion that consists mostly of non-White followers, Mr. King should be open to conducting hearings about the radicalization of other religions and special interest causes. He should not diminish the threats caused by “neo-Nazis, environmental extremists, militias or anti-war groups to national security” simply because he incorrectly believes that there have not been terror-related cases from these groups in the last two years. In fact, because the threat from these groups is continuous and deeply rooted in this country’s history, one can argue that the mere longevity of their terrorist activities makes them more dangerous than this new “radicalization” of the Muslim community. The FBI has long documented their threats; it’s about time Mr. King noticed as well.

¹⁰ http://www.animalagalliance.org/current/home.cfm?Category=Press_Releases&Section=2009_0225_Extremist

¹¹ Id