

REMARKS OF NEW YORK CITY POLICE COMMISSIONER RAYMOND W. KELLY
“TERRORISM’S THREAT TO CITIES LARGE AND SMALL”
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Thank you for that introduction Charlie. I want to commend you, the FBI National Executive Institute and the Major City Chiefs for bringing us together and organizing such an excellent conference. A few months ago, as part of the group’s constant efforts to stay ahead of the curve and plan for this conference, I was asked to touch on the subject of technological-driven policing in my presentation. In light of recent events in Boston and the United Kingdom, I believe a more appropriate title would be: “Terrorism’s Threat to Cities Large and Small.” That is what I’d like to talk to you about today.

In the wake of the bombings at the Boston marathon last month and the savage killing of a British soldier at a military barracks in Woolwich, southeast of London a week ago, much has been written and said in the media about the so-called “new normal,” the underlying threat we face from homegrown, smaller-scale, yet still very lethal terrorist attacks. From the standpoint of New York City there’s not much new about the “new normal” at all. We’ve been contending with it for some time and so have others.

In June 2009, Abdul-Hakim Mujahid Mohammed, formerly known as Carlos Bledsoe, carried out a drive-by shooting on an army recruiting station in Little Rock, Arkansas killing two soldiers. He told police that he had intended to kill as many army personnel as possible. Later that same year, U.S. Army Major Nidal Hissan opened fire at the Fort Hood, Texas Soldier Readiness Processing Center, killing 12 soldiers and one civilian and wounding more than 30 other people. In the past year-and-a-half alone, 38 people have been arrested on terrorism-related charges in the United States and Canada, from New York; to Chicago; Tampa; Mobile, Alabama; Aurora, Illinois; Toronto; Broward County, Florida; and Southern California to name a few.

A big reason for the increase in the tempo of arrests is the outstanding work of the FBI to identify would-be terrorists and apprehend them. In New York, we’ve benefited tremendously from our partnership with the FBI through the Joint Terrorism Task Force. We’ve been the subject of 16 terrorist plots since nine-eleven targeting everything from subways, to synagogues, to airports and iconic locations like Times Square, Wall Street, and the World Trade Center. They’ve been defeated thanks to good work by the NYPD, our federal partners, some combination of the two or just plain luck. However, we are concerned that the success, from a terrorist point of view, of the latest attacks in Boston and London, coupled with the notoriety they’ve received, could inspire even more attempts in venues beyond major cities. Indeed this is already happening, as we saw in the case of a French soldier stabbed outside of Paris last weekend.

With that in mind, there are three main points I'd like to make today. First, the terrorist threat to the U.S. homeland remains severe, complex and unrelenting. Second, medium sized cities such as Boston are now in play for terrorism events. Third, the crude and simplistic attacks Al Qaeda has been encouraging its followers to carry out are now being realized. As we've seen, they're capable of doing tremendous damage.

Let's start with the enduring threat, which we see emanating from three distinct but intertwined sources. One, Al Qaeda central, which is based primarily in the tribal areas of Pakistan. Though diminished greatly by the U.S. military, it still has a functioning leadership as well as an ability to communicate and spread the core ideology that fuels radical islamists worldwide. Al Qaeda central still burns with an intense and unrelenting hostility toward America. Its leaders believe they are at war with the United States and that time is on their side. There's no doubt that key leaders, foremost among them Ayman al-Zawahiri, have not and will not give up on the hope of executing another nine-eleven scale attack. Their ability to accomplish this at the moment is severely constrained, maybe even negligible, as many in the U.S. intelligence community believe. But it would be a mistake to assume their desire to carry out a mass attack on American soil does not persist to this day. The group's resilience – indeed, its continued existence in the face of the pounding it has absorbed from the U.S. and our allies for more than a decade -- means we cannot assume they will abandon their goal to incur mass casualties.

Next is the spread of Al Qaeda allies and affiliates throughout Africa and the Middle East. The list of these groups continues to grow. They include: Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula, based in Yemen and the source of numerous plots against the United States; Al Qaeda of the Islamic Maghreb, based in Algeria with a growing capacity to act beyond its base; Al Shabbab, Al Qaeda's Somalian affiliate which continues to attract followers from the Somali diaspora here and abroad; Ansar al Sharia in Libya, responsible for the Benghazi attack; and Ansar al Dine, the Al Qaeda affiliate fueled by weapons and personnel coming from post-Qaddafi Libya. Then there are Al Qaeda networks in Egypt's Sinai desert, something rarely seen before the Arab spring.

Two other Al Qaeda-linked terrorist organizations stand out in importance today. The first is Al Qaeda of Iraq, considered defunct as recently as 2008. Its powerful re-emergence is a measure of the resilience of such groups. The second is the Al Nusra front in Syria, an Al Qaeda organization spawned by Al Qaeda in Iraq. It leads the rebellion against the Assad regime and is fueling the global jihad by attracting personnel from around the world, including North America.

So how do these affiliates overseas pose a threat to us in the United States? For one thing, they send Americans back home to attack us here.

In 2009, one of the highest-ranking members of Al Qaeda central recruited Najibullah Zazi, a native of Queens and a resident of the Denver-Aurora area, to carry out attacks on New York City. Zazi and two associates had travelled to Pakistan hoping to fight U.S. troops in Afghanistan. Instead, they were given training in explosives and sent back to the United

States armed with the knowledge to build a bomb. Their plot was subsequently defeated through a joint investigation between the NYPD and the FBI.

In 2010, authorities in Chicago arrested Pakistani-American David Headley. Headley had met with leaders of Lashkar-E-Taiba in Pakistan, an Al Qaeda like-minded group, and conducted surveillance for its November 2008 commando assault on Mumbai.

At least 20 young men from Minneapolis, all of Somali descent, joined Al Shabbab in Somalia over the past few years. Our concern is: what happens if those who survive return to the U.S.?

In 2009, Al Qaeda of the Arabian Peninsula dispatched Umar Abdulmuttallab, the underwear bomber, to blow up an airliner over Detroit. One year later, the same group dropped off two "printer bombs" at UPS and FedEx offices in Yemen addressed to the United States. The aim was to blow up the deadly cargo in planes over the eastern seaboard of the United States. Fortunately, the packages were intercepted in England and Dubai.

In 2011, Samir Khan, the intellectual father of Al Qaeda's on-line magazine "inspire," was killed in a U.S. drone strike. Khan was a resident of Charlotte, North Carolina.

Of late, we've seen how the Al Nusra front in Syria is attracting individuals from places such as Illinois to the battlefield there.

Beyond Al Qaeda core, its affiliates, allies and like-minded groups, the danger from homegrown terrorists is a growing feature of the threat landscape we face in the United States and elsewhere. Inspire magazine and propaganda like it provide an easy road map for getting involved. The most infamous example of that is the 2010 Inspire article entitled, "Make a Bomb in the Kitchen of your Mom," a how-to guide for using readily available household materials to build a bomb. It has now become the go-to manual for terrorists bent on destruction, as was the case in Boston and a number of the plots against New York.

Travel to training camps abroad simply isn't necessary and increasingly, it's not part of the profile we uncover when a homegrown terrorist is revealed. The daunting, almost invisible nature of those pursuing "individual jihad" transforms the threat in an important way. Most importantly, it places mid-sized and even smaller urban centers in the United States in the crosshairs of terrorism. For the individual jihadist, size matters less. You can't get much less complicated than running someone down with a car and then hacking him to death with a meat cleaver and long knives. If terrorism is theater, New York and London will always be in the spotlight. But I think we learned with the Boston marathon that all the world is becoming a stage.

While the world was horrified by these events, Internet chatter among the jihadi forums we check regularly shows that many think of the perpetrators in Boston and Woolwich as heroes. In both cases, we saw that the terrorists were prepared to confront police and die

for their cause. Officers in Watertown and Woolwich did heroic jobs, but you can see what we're up against. Unfortunately, you don't need much more than a crude explosive device to kill, maim, and capture the world's attention all at once. This means each of us has to be more vigilant than ever.

The challenge with big, complicated terrorism plots is the potential for catastrophic consequences. But they are easier to spot. The challenge with the attacks we saw in Boston and Woolwich and the several that have failed in New York are that they're small and hard to detect. Faisal Shahzad was on no one's radar when he drove his SUV filled with explosives into Times Square in May 2010. We just got lucky in that he elected to use less potent ingredients in the hopes of avoiding detection during his acquisition of them.

The ease with which terrorists can travel within the United States and beyond also makes inter-agency cooperation a must. For this reason the NYPD created Operation Sentry. This is a dynamic, intelligence-driven partnership among 140 police and law enforcement agencies throughout the northeast and other parts of the country. Its premise is built on real world events. For example, the plot to bomb the World Trade Center in 1993 was hatched across the Hudson River, in New Jersey. It was there that the chemicals were mixed, that the truck bomb was assembled and laced with cyanide. The staging area was well outside New York City. In 2005 when suicide bombers struck the London transit system, they did so using explosive-filled backpacks assembled in the city of Leeds, 180 miles north of the target. And Faisal Shahzad constructed his car bomb in Connecticut.

Our partners in Operation Sentry include the Boston Police Department. Immediately after the bombings in Boston, we assigned a lieutenant and two sergeants to the Boston Regional Intelligence Center to gather information. Last week we hosted a group of 20 members of Massachusetts law enforcement to discuss policing major events including July 4th.

In the aftermath of the attacks, we also dispatched a lieutenant from our intelligence division to Youngstown, Ohio to meet with executives from Phantom Fireworks. This is the company that unwittingly sold the fireworks to both the Tsarnayev brothers and Faisal Shahzad that they used to construct their bombs. We want Phantom to spread the word to its employees working at 1,200 locations nationwide to be aware that individuals seeking to build explosive devices could exploit their products. We're asking them to deny or flag suspicious purchases and to alert us if they believe there are possible links to terrorism. This is part and parcel of our Operation Nexus program, in which we partner with thousands of business owners in New York, Connecticut and New Jersey to heighten their awareness of potential terrorist activity. We've also established a program with 11,000 members of the region's private security industry, sharing information and training through an initiative called NYPD shield.

To defend ourselves we must also maintain a good working relationship with the FBI and other federal partners through the Joint Terrorism Task Force. Despite the disagreements you've heard about from time to time, the NYPD and the FBI have a strong and essential partnership. Having said that, elected officials and their police chiefs have an obligation to

do all they can to protect their citizens. In order to do that, they need to know the severity of the threat. Local police departments must insist on receiving as much information as soon as possible.

The only way to catch a lone wolf is through shared intelligence gathering. That's why our efforts to defend against terrorism must be proactive, so that we can find those who are in the earliest stages of planning violent acts and stop them. Often times, the use of undercover police officers may be the only effective way to identify homegrown terrorists who are often living here legally and operating alone or with just one or two accomplices. Ideally, through strong partnerships, good intelligence and expert analysis, we'll identify plots in their earliest stages.

In New York, we're also installing an expanded network of smart cameras and license plate readers which, when tied together, greatly enhance investigations. Smart cameras have the capacity to alert us to the presence of suspicious packages before they detonate, should one be an actual explosive device. Cameras are a very powerful tool for law enforcement. In my opinion, you can't have enough of them. We should all be encouraged by the fact that the public is overwhelmingly supportive of their use. Recent polls show 80% approve. Although excellent in helping to apprehend suspects after the fact, this technology still amounts to "just in time" prevention. The vast number of targets available to terrorists make it virtually impossible in all instances to intercept a device after its been planted. Ideally, we need to disrupt plots long before the backpack is left on the sidewalk.

To sum up: good intelligence remains the key to prevention. The threat of terrorism has not diminished. It is here to stay and we have to face that reality. Intelligence gathering is essential, including the use of undercover officers, to meet the continuing threat of terrorism lawfully and effectively. Technology is a powerful tool but it has its limitations. Finally, partnership and information sharing have never been more important in keeping our cities safe.

The fight against terrorism is a long haul, one that all of us are in together. Even with combat thousands of miles away, the front can return to our own backyards at any time. We all have to be prepared for that eventuality. The good news is that U.S. law enforcement is better prepared than ever before to meet the threat. And we will only become more so as a result of this conference and our continued collaboration. Thank you again for this opportunity to speak and let's keep up the outstanding work together.