



Out of the Shadows:

Getting Ahead of Prisoner Radicalization

A Special Report by
The George Washington University
Homeland Security Policy Institute

The University of Virginia
Critical Incident Analysis Group

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About The Homeland Security Policy Institute

The George Washington University Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) is a unique, nonpartisan “think and do tank” that builds bridges between theory and practice to advance homeland security through a multi and interdisciplinary approach. By convening policymakers and practitioners at all levels of government and the private sector, HSPI creates innovative strategies and solutions to current and future threats to the nation.

About The Critical Incident Analysis Group

Critical incidents have the potential for creating social trauma and undermining social trust in government - ultimately impacting community life and even the practice of democracy. The Critical Incident Analysis Group works to understand the impacts of critical incidents on government and the societies they serve and to counteract these effects through the study of past incidents.

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Executive Summary

The potential for radicalization of prison inmates in the United States poses a threat of unknown magnitude to the national security of the U.S. Prisons have long been places where extremist ideology and calls to violence could find a willing ear, and conditions are often conducive to radicalization. With the world's largest prison population (over 2 million – ninety-three percent of whom are in state and local prisons and jails)¹ and highest incarceration rate (701 out of every 100,000)², America faces what could be an enormous challenge – every radicalized prisoner becomes a potential terrorist recruit. Attorney General Alberto Gonzales recently stated that “[t]he threat of homegrown terrorist cells – radicalized online, in prisons and in other groups of socially isolated souls – may be as dangerous as groups like al Qaeda, if not more so. They certainly present new challenges to detection.”³ The London transit bombings of 2005 and the Toronto terrorist plot of 2006, to name just two incidents, illustrate the threat posed by a state's own radicalized citizens. By acting upon international lessons learned, the U.S. may operate from a proactive position.

Under the leadership of The George Washington University's Homeland Security Policy Institute (HSPI) and The University of Virginia's Critical Incident Analysis Group (CIAG), a task force of diverse subject matter experts was convened to analyze what is currently known about radicalization and recruitment in U.S. prison systems at the federal, state and local levels. The goal of this diverse, multidisciplinary group was to give unbiased and well-informed recommendations for further action. The task force performed an extensive literature review and received briefings from professionals with expertise in this area. Federal, state and local officials provided background information on radicalization and ongoing efforts to decrease the threat of terrorist activity in prisons. The task force sought and received perspectives from religious service providers in prisons and jails, behavioral and social scientists, and members of the national security and intelligence communities. Researchers of radicalization in foreign prisons provided first hand accounts of radicalization and terrorist activities overseas.⁴ Due to the sensitive nature of many of these briefings and the desire of some briefers to remain anonymous, this report makes reference to information for which no source is cited. All information provided, where no source is provided, originates from task force briefings with subject matter experts and officials with personal experience in dealing with prisoner radicalization.

This report focuses on the process of radicalization in prison. Radicalization “refers to the process by which inmates...adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures need to be taken for political or religious purposes.”⁵ By “extreme views,” this report includes beliefs that are anti-social, politically rebellious, and anti-authoritarian. This report focuses,

¹ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prison Statistics*, 15 August 2006, <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/correct.htm>> (13 September 2006).

² Roy Walmsley, *World Prison Population (5th Ed.)* (Home Office, Publication 234, 2003).

³ Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales, “Stopping Terrorists Before They Strike: The Justice Department's Power of Prevention,” Testimony before the World Affairs Council of Pittsburgh, delivered on April 16, 2006.

⁴ See Appendix A.

⁵ A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers, Department of Justice, Office of The Inspector General April 2004, p. 6.

in particular, on religious radicalization in conjunction with the practice of Islam. Radical beliefs have been used to subvert the ideals of every major religion in the world. Just as young people may become radicalized by “cut-and-paste” versions of the Qur’an via the Internet⁶, new inmates may gain the same distorted understanding of the faith from gang leaders or other influential inmates. The task force recognizes the potentially positive impact of religion on inmates, and it should be noted that inmates have a constitutional right to practice their religion,⁷ a right reinforced by further legislation.⁸ Prison facilities bear the burden of proof if they wish to deny an inmate’s request for any service or activity related to religion. Plainly, inmate conversion to Islam, or any other religion, is not synonymous with radicalization.

Prison gangs may adopt a form of Islam, unique to prison, that incorporates values of gang loyalty and violence. Several Imams interviewed in the course of producing this report characterized this phenomenon as “Jailhouse Islam” – a significant threat to security in prisons.

In addition to radical Muslim influence, U.S. prisons have borne the imprint of right-wing extremist groups and cults known to participate in criminal activity. These groups share certain characteristics, interests, and goals with each other, and insights about terrorism can be gained from an examination of operations and recruitment. Some radical right-wing groups have found common ideological cause with Muslim extremists, exemplified by their shared hostility towards Israel.

A number of terrorist groups have used narcotics trafficking and other illegal activities to support their operations.⁹ On occasion, terrorists and criminal gangs have cooperated to achieve their own ends, as was the case in 2004 when terrorists, supported by traditional criminals, attacked the Madrid rail system. Radical Muslim gangs are growing more sophisticated as they adapt the practices of existing gangs.

There have been a number of publicized connections between former prisoners and terrorism:

- Jeff Fort, a gang leader in Chicago, Illinois, converted to Islam while incarcerated in 1965. Fort went on to found a group called El Rukn, which made a name for itself in 1985 when it brokered a deal with the Libyan government to carry out attacks on U.S. police stations, government facilities, military bases, and passenger airplanes in exchange for \$2.5 million and asylum in Tripoli.¹⁰

⁶ Zeyno Baran, Director, International Security and Energy Programs. The Nixon Center “Combating al-Qaeda and the Militant Islamic Threat,” Testimony before the Committee on Armed Services.

⁷ United States Constitution, First Amendment

⁸ The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000

⁹ Steven C. McCraw, Assistant Director, Office for Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism – A Dangerous Mix,” Testimony before the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, delivered on May 20, 2003.

¹⁰ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism: Terrorism Knowledge Base, Group Profile: El Rukn.

- James Ellison, the founder of the extremist Christian group Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord (CSA), met Robert G. Millar while incarcerated.¹¹ Millar, a leader in the radical “Christian Identity” movement, became Ellison’s spiritual advisor in prison. After Ellison was released, he recruited for CSA and established a compound with his followers. When the compound was eventually raided, authorities found homemade landmines and U.S. Army anti-tank rockets. In addition, they found a large supply of cyanide that the CSA was apparently planning to use to poison a city’s water supply.
- Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the emir of Egypt's Gama'at al Islamia (the Islamic Group), is the radical cleric who plotted to bomb New York City landmarks in 1993. Upon being sentenced to a life term, he issued a decree from federal prison, declaring of Americans that "Muslims everywhere [should] dismember their nation, tear them apart, ruin their economy, provoke their corporations, destroy their embassies, attack their interests, sink their ships, . . .shoot down their planes, [and] kill them on land, at sea, and in the air. Kill them wherever you find them." Osama bin Laden later claimed that this fatwa provided religious authority for the 9/11 attacks. Abdel Rahman has continued trying to run his organization while incarcerated - and three defendants were convicted of terrorism charges in 2005 for helping him do so.
- Richard Reid is believed to have converted to Islam and been radicalized by an Imam while incarcerated in Great Britain. He was later apprehended while attempting to detonate a bomb on a U.S. commercial flight in December 2001.
- A recently foiled plot to attack numerous government and Jewish targets in California was devised inside New Folsom State Prison. The perpetrators were members of an inmate-founded group called Jami'iy yat Ul-Islam Is Saheeh (Assembly of Authentic Islam). The leader of this group, Kevin Lamar James, advocated jihad against the U.S. government and supporters of Israel. Two men implicated in the plot were recruited from a local mosque by a disciple of James who had been released from the prison.

There exists a number of other examples, but due to the sensitive nature of ongoing investigations, they cannot be discussed in detail.

Radicalization is occurring in prisons throughout the world. There has been growing concern about the presence of radical Islam in European prisons. French officials report that radical Islamic views are being preached in a majority of French prisons.¹² The ethnic and socioeconomic background of the prisoners, as well as the political environment, presents unique challenges in each country. Despite these differences, much can be learned from international experiences, especially those of Western Europe, due to Europe’s large Muslim

¹¹ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism: Terrorism Knowledge Base, Group Profile: Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord (CSA).

¹² Pascale Combelles Siegel, “*Radical Islam and the French Muslim Prison Population*,” *Terrorism Monitor*, Volume 4, Issue 15 (July 27, 2006).

populations and significant numbers of incarcerated Muslims. While the U.S. must be concerned about the ability of radicalized inmates released in Europe to enter this country, or participate in transatlantic terror networks, we must also be vigilant with regard to radicalization in our own prisons. A greater understanding of the susceptibility of particular inmates to radicalization and the process by which they become radicalized can act as a force multiplier for those agencies currently combating terrorism.

Key Findings

- Radicalization is neither unique to Islam nor a recent phenomenon, and remains the exception among prisoners rather than the rule. Right-wing extremist groups are also present in prisons and have an extensive history of terrorist attacks.
- “Jailhouse Islam”, based upon cut-and-paste versions of the Qur’an, incorporates violent prison culture into religious practice.
- The inadequate number of Muslim religious services providers increases the risk of radicalization. Further, upon release from prison, the inability to track inmates coupled with lack of social support to reintegrate them into the community gives rise to a vulnerable moment in which they may be recruited by radical groups, posing as social support organizations that are more interested in their own extremist agendas than in the welfare of released prisoners.
- Information collection and sharing between and among federal, state and local prison systems is integral to tracking radical behavior of prisoners and religious services providers. Significant strides have been made at the federal level, but change at the state and local level, where the overwhelming majority of inmates are incarcerated, is much more difficult to assess.
- Resource limitations – both in terms of manpower and financing – hinder efforts to combat prisoner radicalization. Officials in California report that every investigation into radical groups in their prisons uncovers new leads, but that they simply do not have enough investigators to follow every case of radicalization.
- Radicalization in prisons is a global problem and bears upon the national security of the U.S. In Europe, Latin America and elsewhere the threat has progressed farther than it has in the U.S., giving officials the opportunity to learn from foreign prison radicalization cases so as to confront the problem here in its early stages. Information sharing between and among the U.S. and other countries is crucial.
- At present there is insufficient information about prisoner radicalization to qualify the threat. There is a significant lack of social science research on this issue. No comprehensive records currently exist, for example, on the religious affiliations of inmates when they enter prison. This can be improved by policies that promote good research while continuing to secure the rights of inmates who are involved in these studies.

- Prison officials are understandably stretched thin by the need to maintain order in overcrowded and under-funded facilities. Nevertheless, because information is an essential precursor to action, investigation of radicalization in prisons must become a homeland security and counterterrorism priority.
- Religious radicalization within prisons is a complex problem. No one profession alone is equipped to analyze and recommend change. A multi-disciplinary approach that includes perspectives of religion, criminal justice, intelligence, law, and behavioral sciences is necessary for proactive analysis of the phenomenon.
- Knowledge must be translated into action. Awareness, education and training programs must be developed for personnel working in prison, probation and parole settings.
- The Intelligence Reform Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 calls for the establishment of the Information Sharing Environment (ISE) to support our nation's counter-terrorism efforts. It is critical that information regarding the radicalization of prisoners in state, local, and federal correctional facilities be included as part of the body of information shared through the ISE.

Key Recommendation

- Congress should establish a Commission to investigate this issue in depth. An objective risk assessment is urgently needed in order to better understand the nature of the threat, and to formulate and calibrate proactive prevention and response efforts accordingly. Enhanced information would enable officials to address this issue now, rather than forcing them to manage a crisis later.

Background Information

Prisons have long been places where extremist ideology and calls to violence could find willing recruits. Recently, the spiritual philosopher of al Qaeda, Sayyid Qutb, wrote the radical Islamist manifesto *Ma'alim fi al-Tariq* (Milestones along the Road) while in an Egyptian prison. Abu Musab al-Zarqawi was an unaccomplished Jordanian revolutionary until his imprisonment, where he recruited followers and controlled prison life in a manner similar to that of a powerful gang leader. Speaking of their time together in prison, a follower of Zarqawi said that “in each prison it was possible for us to have letters sent out and books brought in...The government imprisons us, and God gives us everything we need...prison makes our fight stronger.”¹³

Since September 11, 2001, several individuals who were radicalized while incarcerated have been involved in terrorist operations. This has increased awareness and concern about the spread of radical religious beliefs and their potential impact on terrorist recruiting in the U.S. prison system. Prior to recent efforts by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP), the dissemination of religious materials and teachings in federal prisons was not monitored in a consistent or systematic fashion. The process of radicalization amongst incarcerated Muslims remains poorly understood and the limited amount of extant research hinders the development of effective intervention techniques.

Prison provides an ideal environment for radicalization of young men and women. Research on the characteristics of terrorist recruits abroad has identified youth, unemployment, alienation, a need for a sense of self-importance and a need to belong to a group as common factors, all of which are present among U.S. prison populations.¹⁴ Although they may have had some exposure to mainstream Christianity, many inmates have not had prior experience with Islam before they are incarcerated. Lacking an understanding of mainstream interpretations of Islam, these inmates are vulnerable to extremist versions of the religion. The threat of terrorist recruiting in U.S. prisons was highlighted in October 2003 during a hearing before the U.S. Senate Subcommittee on Terrorism, Technology and Homeland Security, which identified two major areas of concern in the U.S. federal prison system.¹⁵ First, a variety of socioeconomic and psychological factors make inmates vulnerable to radical ideology. Second, groups known to support terrorist causes have distributed radical literature to the prison population. Although the extent of the problem was not determined, witnesses stated that serious problems with the screening of religious services providers have created an opportunity for radicalization.

There have been a number of publicized connections between former prisoners and terrorism:

¹³ Jean-Charles Brisard. *Zarqawi: The New Face of Al-Qaeda* (Other Press, New York: 2005; p. 44).

¹⁴ R.A. Hudson,, “The Sociology and Psychology of Terrorism: Who Becomes and Terrorist and Why?,” Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, 1999, p. 24.

¹⁵ John Pistole, Assistant Director, Counterterrorism Division, Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Terrorist Recruitment and Infiltration in the United States: Prisons and Military as an Operational Base,” Testimony before the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, delivered on October 14, 2003.

- Jeff Fort, a gang leader in Chicago, Illinois, converted to Islam while incarcerated in 1965. Fort went on to found a group called El Rukn, which made a name for itself in 1985 when it brokered a deal with the Libyan government to carry out attacks on U.S. police stations, government facilities, military bases, and passenger airplanes in exchange for \$2.5 million and asylum in Tripoli.¹⁶
- James Ellison, the founder of the extremist Christian group Covenant, Sword and Arm of the Lord (CSA), met Robert G. Millar while incarcerated.¹⁷ Millar, a leader in the radical “Christian Identity” movement, became Ellison’s spiritual advisor in prison. After Ellison was released, he recruited for CSA and established a compound with his followers. When the compound was eventually raided, authorities found homemade landmines and U.S. Army anti-tank rockets. In addition, they found a large supply of cyanide that the CSA was apparently planning to use to poison a city’s water supply.
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- Richard Reid is believed to have converted to Islam and been radicalized by an imam while incarcerated in Great Britain.¹⁸ He was later apprehended while attempting to detonate a bomb on a U.S. commercial flight in December of 2001.
- A recently foiled plot to attack numerous government and Jewish targets in California was devised inside New Folsom State Prison. The perpetrators were members of an inmate-founded group called Jami'iyat Ul-Islam Is Saheeh (Assembly of Authentic Islam).¹⁹ The leader of this group, Kevin Lamar James, advocated jihad against the U.S. government and supporters of Israel. Two men implicated in the plot were recruited from a local mosque by a disciple of James who had been released from the prison.

¹⁶ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism: Terrorism Knowledge Base, Group Profile: El Rukn.

¹⁷ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism: Terrorism Knowledge Base, Group Profile: Covenant, Sword and Army of the Lord (CSA).

¹⁸ A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons’ Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers, Department of Justice, Office of The Inspector General April 2004, p. 6.

¹⁹ See Appendix A.

For this reason, prisoner radicalization and its implications warrant study. While some literature on the characteristics of terrorist recruits exists, there is little thorough work in the U.S. context. Individual or environmental factors involved in the distinct processes from religious conversion to radicalization to recruitment by a terrorist organization are, ultimately, not completely understood.²⁰

Defining Terms²¹

For consistency, the task force adopted the following definitions of radicalization and recruitment. The first two are adapted from a report by the Department of Justice's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), released in April 2004 following Senate hearings on the confluence between terrorism and crime.²² Other definitions are terms used by FBI personnel or were developed by the members of the task force, deriving from their collective and diverse subject matter expertise.²³

Radicalization - "refers to the process by which inmates...adopt extreme views, including beliefs that violent measures need to be taken for political or religious purposes." By "extreme views," this report specifies beliefs that are anti-social, politically rebellious and anti-authoritarian.

Recruitment - "is used to mean the solicitation of individuals to commit terrorist acts or engage in behavior for a terrorism purpose."²⁴ Non-radicalized inmates may be persuaded to participate in actions that directly benefit the terrorist network. Therefore, a recruited individual would include anyone in the prison environment who provides support to terrorists. Many members of a terrorist network may not be fully aware of the value that their actions bring to the network, as in the case of a prisoner who is coerced through blackmail to smuggle cell phone parts into a prison.²⁵

Individual radicalization - results from exposure to a radical religious services provider or charismatic inmate espousing radical ideas. This type of individual may decide to pursue violence on his own, becoming a "lone-wolf" terrorist. He would not necessarily have the support of a network, but may seek out a network in the future, and may be at risk for recruitment at some later date.

Organized radicalization - a process supported by external groups who seek to influence vulnerable inmates. These groups coordinate the entry of radical religious services providers

²⁰ S. Gerwehr and S. Daly, *Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment*, (McGraw-Hill Homeland Security Handbook, 2006), Chapter 5, p. 73-89.

²¹ Definitions of radicalization, particularly as applied to prison settings, inevitably raise questions regarding what constitutes extreme and what is constitutionally permissible for government to limit. The task force encourages further review and possible revision of this definition by the commission that the task force is recommending be established (see the Findings and Recommendations sections of this report).

²² Department of Justice, OIG Review, 2004.

²³ See Appendix A.

²⁴ Department of Justice, OIG Review, 2004.

²⁵ Department of Justice, OIG Review, 2004.

into prisons and jails. They provide inmates with reading materials that include non-traditional or extremist interpretations of the Qur'an. Once released, inmates are also directed to supportive groups that espouse violence, such as radical mosques. The social services offered by radical groups act as a vehicle for "top-down recruiting," also known as "scouting". This involves radical groups identifying released inmates with valuable skills who can be recruited to carry out specific actions in support of the group's agenda. This process occurs over the long term and direct recruiting may result long after the inmate has become radicalized.

Gang radicalization - makes use of pre-existing prison gangs or networks to attract inmates. A principal reason for joining an existing gang is the belief that membership in such a group confers physical protection and psychological support. Gangs also provide a sense of belonging to disillusioned youths. Once these groups become radicalized, their money, communications networks and intimidation factor can be used to recruit others and support terrorist networks.

Most prisoners who join Islamic gangs for protection adopt Islam temporarily out of necessity, a phenomenon called "Prislam" by officials of the New York Police Department.²⁶ In contrast, a small proportion of converted prisoners later become engaged in terrorist activity.

Para-radicalization - takes place when non-radicalized individuals, including inmates, correctional officers or other prison staff aid or abet radicalized networks. Wittingly or not, they are an important part of terrorist network operations in the prison setting. Using bribery and intimidation, radical inmates can obtain, for example, smuggled communications devices, pass messages and cause the strategic transfer of particular inmates.

The Problem

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF RADICALIZATION

Inmates in general are particularly vulnerable to radical religious ideology due to their anti-social attitudes and the need to identify with other inmates sharing the same background, beliefs or ethnicity. When there has been little exposure to organized religion in the community, the inmate's understanding of the religion is dependent upon the religious leadership and materials at their facilities. It is during this period that radical rhetoric may exploit the inmate's vulnerabilities and lack of grounded religious knowledge by providing validation to the inmate's disillusionment with society and creating an outlet for their violent impulses. Possible psychological factors increasing vulnerability include a high level of distress, cultural disillusionment, lack of intrinsic religious beliefs or values, dysfunctional family system or dependent personality tendencies.²⁷ These factors are prevalent among prison populations. From an ideological standpoint, radical religious groups allow the inmates to demonize their perceived enemies and view themselves as righteous. Prisons are

²⁶ See Appendix A.

²⁷ S. Gerwehr and S. Daly, *Al-Qaida: Terrorist Selection and Recruitment*, p. 84.

inherently violent environments and therefore fertile ground for radicalization. Inmates are drawn to radical groups out of the need for protection or to gain status amongst other prisoners.

Studies have suggested that terrorist recruitment methods are not always expected to yield a high number of recruits.²⁸ Radical messages may be delivered to many prisoners with the understanding that most will resist radicalization. As demonstrated in the New Folsom plot, a single radicalized inmate can be a significant threat. Even if the radical message resonates with only a few inmates, they could then be targeted for more intense one-on-one instruction.

It should be noted that there is a difference between a radicalized prisoner, who holds radical religious or political beliefs, and a prisoner who has been recruited by a terrorist group and who has chosen to commit violence. A cycle or sequence from radicalization to violence exists, beginning with the conditions of the prison setting and first exposure to radical ideas, and ending with the decision to become a terrorist. Only a few who become radicalized go on to actively pursue terrorism. An important resource for combating terrorism would be to determine which factor or factors existing in prison influence some radicalized prisoners to make the specific leap from radical beliefs to violence in the name of those beliefs.

RADICALIZATION IN U.S. PRISONS

I. Religious Services

The recruitment of Muslim chaplains has been limited by the lack of recognized national religious organizations to administer the vetting process. Compounding the problem, has been the controversy over imams espousing violent views, as has been seen in several New York cases. The lack of well-trained Muslim chaplains has led to a reliance on religious contractors and volunteers, especially in state and local facilities. A 2004 survey of 193 wardens of state correctional facilities showed that only half of religious services were physically supervised and just over half used any sort of audio or video monitoring capabilities.²⁹ Half the institutions allowed inmates themselves to act as spiritual leaders. Prison facilities bear the burden of proof if they wish to deny an inmate's request for any service or activity related to religion.

Currently, chaplains "must have a Master of Divinity degree from an accredited residential seminary or theology school."³⁰ However, that alone does not confirm that they have sufficient religious education to qualify them to fulfill Muslim religious needs. The same point applies to a contracted Muslim religious services provider or volunteer. Given the relatively small number of chaplains, contracted Muslim religious service providers cannot be routinely supervised by chaplains. Lack of education is a significant problem; contracted religious services providers and volunteers are not required to have formal religious

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ George W. Knox, "The Problem of Gangs and Security Threat Groups in American Prisons Today: Recent Research, Findings From the 2004 Prison Gang Survey," (National Gang Crime Research Center, 2005)

³⁰ A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers, Department of Justice, Office of The Inspector General April 2004, p. 17.

education. Prisoners may find it difficult to fulfill their basic religious obligations because of the limitations of the services offered. Even when they are available, some qualified Muslim religious leaders have been intimidated by radical inmates who consequently assume the role of religious services provider for themselves. In the absence of qualified Muslim religious services providers, inmates can become attracted to radical views and the politico-religious messages coming from other inmates who assume informal positions of religious leadership.

Due to the lack of proper religious authorities and academically credentialed experts available to review all materials entering the prison system, no consistently applied standard or procedure exists to determine what reading material is appropriate. In the absence of monitoring by authoritative Islamic chaplains, materials that advocate violence have infiltrated the prison system undetected. The lack of individuals with a thorough knowledge of Islam, the Qur'an and other religious materials entering prisons offers an opportunity for recruiters outside of prisons to paint a violent picture of Islam. Radical literature and extremist translations and interpretations of the Qur'an have been distributed to prisoners by groups suspected or known to support terrorism.³¹ The Noble Qur'an, a Wahabbi/Salafist version written in English, is widely available in prisons. A recent review in the *Middle East Quarterly* characterized this version as reading "...like a supremacist Muslim, anti-Semite, anti-Christian polemic than a rendition of the Islamic scripture."³² Of particular concern is its appendix, entitled "The Call to *Jihad* (Holy Fighting in Allah's Cause)." Saeed Ismaeel's *The Differences Between the Shee'ah and Muslims Who Follow the Sunnah*, written in plain English, is another such example of radical material.

Radical Muslim prison groups use Arabic language and script as codes – a practice adopted from existing prison gangs and the use of ancient scripts as code by right-wing extremist groups – to communicate secretly and to smuggle radical materials undetected.³³ Some prisoners have indirect access to the Internet, which opens up another avenue for prisoners to access radical materials. These materials end up in the hands of inmates acting as prayer service leaders, who then use the materials to recruit inmates to follow the radical views expressed.

Extremist interpretations of the Qur'an use footnotes and supplements to lead the reader to a radical interpretation of the scripture. For example, in April 1993 a riot, involving approximately 450 prisoners took place in a maximum security facility in Lucasville, Ohio. Many prisoners feared that correction officials would force them to have tuberculosis vaccinations, which Muslim inmates perceived would violate their faith; some inmates also desired to settle old disputes with other prisoners. Following the riot, in which ten died and more than forty million dollars worth of damage was caused, the investigating authority found radical materials (books and unauthorized audio materials) in Muslim inmates' cells. Prison authorities later banned all of these materials.³⁴

³¹ See Appendix A.

³² Khaleel Mohammed, "Assessing English Translations of the Qur'an", *Middle East Quarterly*, Volume 12, Number 2 (Spring 2005).

³³ Criminal Investigative Division, "Gangs Use Ciphers and Secret Codes to Communicate," Federal Bureau of Investigation Intelligence Bulletin (Unclassified), 20 July 2006.

³⁴ See *Lucasville Prison Riot*, Ohio Historical Society, 2005, See also, "End to Prison Riot Possible, Officials Say," *Tulsa World*, April 18, 1993, Page A8; See also, "Inmates End Standoff: 5 Guards Freed," *Tulsa World*, April 22, 1993, Page A1.

II. Support after Release

Although just over two million inmates are incarcerated in U.S. jails and prisons, a substantially greater number have served time and have returned to society. According to a recent report released by the Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, "13.5 million people spend time in jail or prison, and 95 percent of them eventually return to our communities."³⁵ Both incarcerated and released individuals are vulnerable to radicalization and recruitment, the latter because many inmates leave prison with very little financial, emotional, or family support. To the extent that radical groups may draw upon funding from well-financed extremist backers, they can offer significantly more social and financial support to released prisoners than other legitimate community support programs. Much community support is faith-based, and in many cases can assist in successful reintegration with society. However, when inadequate formal support is provided for inmate transition, radical religious groups may fill the void by offering both financial and emotional support. By providing for prisoners in their time of greatest need, these organizations can build upon the loyalty developed during the individual's time in prison. If connections are made with a radicalized community group, the recently released inmate may remain at risk for recruitment or continued involvement in terrorist networks. Released inmates have significant potential value for terrorist networks that have recruited them.

We currently lack the necessary data to determine both the extent and patterns of radical religious recruitment for incarcerated prisoners and released inmates. Even if a religious provider is removed from one facility, that provider can simply apply to enter a prison in another state. No comprehensive database exists to track religious services providers who are known to expose inmates to radical religious rhetoric.

III. Other Radical Religious Groups Relevant to U.S. Prisons

The growth of Islam in prisons, the relative deficit of vetted religious services providers, and world events have all focused attention on radical Islam. However, it is worth noting that right-wing Christian extremist groups not only have a history of terrorist attacks on U.S. soil, but a longstanding relationship with prisoners. There are many groups aligning themselves with "Christian Identity" ideology. These groups include Posse Comitatus, The Order, Aryan Nations, and many of the militia movements across the country. Aryan Nations has maintained an outreach program with inmates since the 1970's. The racial beliefs of these groups make them appealing to white inmates who feel they must associate with inmates of the same race. As with Islamic groups, this may be related to the need for protection. Some of these groups have found common cause with extremist Muslim groups, who share their hostility towards the U.S. government and Israel. Most recently, a number of white supremacist groups vocalized their support for Hezbollah in its conflict with Israel.³⁶

The Phineas Priesthood, a terrorist organization adhering to "Christian Identity" ideology, is significant in that it espouses the concept of a "leaderless resistance." By requiring that its

³⁵ The Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons, "Confronting Confinement," June 2006, p.1.

³⁶ Counterterrorism Division, "White Supremacist Response to the Conflict in Lebanon," Federal Bureau of Investigation Intelligence Bulletin (Unclassified), 7 August 2006.

members act independently and in extreme secrecy, its activities are very difficult to detect.³⁷ Other types of terrorist groups may adopt this strategy as their networks become less centralized.

IV. Organized Prison Gangs

International terrorist organizations share a funding source with gangs based in U.S. prisons – criminal enterprise. During testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee in 2003, Steven C. McCraw, Assistant Director of the FBI, stated, “Terrorism and crime are inextricably linked. International and Domestic Terrorism Organizations and their supporters engage in a myriad of crime to fund and facilitate terrorist activities.” These criminal enterprises, he reported, “include extortion, kidnapping, robbery, corruption, alien smuggling, document fraud, arms trafficking, cyber crime, white collar crime, smuggling of contraband, money laundering and certainly drug trafficking.”³⁸ The National Drug Threat Assessment in 2006 stated that “it is possible that some gangs may associate with foreign terrorists for the purpose of conducting drug trafficking and various criminal activities. Moreover, the potential for such relationships exists primarily among U.S. prison gangs, whose members seem to be particularly susceptible to terrorist and other extremist recruitment.”³⁹

V. Challenges at the State and Local Levels

The U.S. corrections system consists of a complex network of prisons and jails at the federal, state and local levels. Out of the over two million inmates in the U.S. prison system, ninety-three percent are in state and local prisons and jails.⁴⁰ The threat of prisoner radicalization is therefore even more paramount for state and local officials.

In California state prisons, for example, there exists no standard policy for vetting Muslim religious services providers. Instead, policy is set by the warden of each prison – leading to thirty-three different policies for each of California’s thirty-three adult facilities. A lack of a single state-wide policy hinders attempts at identifying and monitoring radical religious services providers. Most providers are endorsed by local organizations which have different requirements for religious education and provide different levels of scrutiny to weed out potential radicals.

California employs twenty Muslim chaplains for a population of over 300,000 prisoners and parolees, limiting their ability to oversee religious services. Prisoners must often rely on fellow inmates or volunteers to meet their religious needs. One California state prison alone hosts 3,000 volunteers each month, an impossible number for short-staffed prison officials to

³⁷ Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism, Terrorism Knowledge Database, accessed July 13, 2006, <http://www.tkb.org/Home.jsp>.

³⁸ Steven C. McCraw, Assistant Director, Office for Intelligence, Federal Bureau of Investigation, “Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism – A Dangerous Mix,” Testimony before the Committee on the Judiciary, U.S. Senate, delivered on May 20, 2003.

³⁹ “National Drug Threat Assessment 2006,” National Drug Intelligence Center, U.S. Department of Justice, Product No. 2006-Q0317-001, p. 35.

⁴⁰ Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Prison Statistics*, 15 August 2006, <<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/correct.htm>> (13 September 2006).

monitor effectively.

State prison officials lack the manpower and financial resources to thoroughly investigate radicalization occurring within their facilities. Successful disruption of radicalization is currently more a matter of luck than of ability or intent. The terrorist plot formulated at New Folsom State Prison is one such example. The responsible group, Jam'iyat Ul-Islam Is Saheeh (Assembly of Authentic Islam or JIS), was founded by Kevin Lamar James while he was imprisoned. James recruited his fellow inmates to JIS, while other members recruited outside the prison after having been paroled. The group planned a number of attacks on targets in the Los Angeles area, including U.S. military facilities, synagogues and the Israeli consulate.⁴¹ The plot was discovered because a member of the group dropped a cell phone during a robbery, fortuitously alerting authorities to the group and the plot. A lack of resources, mainly personnel shortages, prevents law enforcement officials from operating more proactively.

The Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD) has indicated that radicalization is a growing problem within their jurisdiction, with a number of potential leads to be followed. However, a lack of trained experts and analysts prevents the LASD from investigating many potential groups and plots, and hinders them from sharing intelligence with other departments and agencies. With dozens of overcrowded prisons (some are at 200 percent capacity and growing) and hundreds of thousands of prisoners and parolees to oversee, prison officials must devote most of their resources to maintaining basic order and security, with little left over for investigating radicalization. This is compounded by the fact that radical inmates, wishing to avoid attention, act as model prisoners, leading prison officials to focus on violent prisoners while overlooking radicalization. The LASD – one of the largest Sheriff's departments in the country – reports that its manpower shortage is of the magnitude of a thousand personnel.⁴²

EUROPEAN PRISONS

In the U.S., Muslims make up a relatively small percentage of the prison population. According to the Chief of the FBOP's Chaplaincy Services Branch, "approximately 9,000 inmates, or about 6 percent of the inmate population, seek Islamic religious services."⁴³ In contrast, Muslims are significantly overrepresented in European prisons.⁴⁴ For example, Muslims make up about 8 percent of the general populations of France, but there are approximately ten times as many Muslims in French prisons as there are in the general population. Though Islam is the most prevalent religion in French prisons,⁴⁵ there are some 600 Catholic priests attending Christian inmates compared to 95 imams attending Muslim

⁴¹ United States District Court for the Central District of California, October 2004 Grand Jury, Indictment against Kevin James.

⁴² See Appendix A.

⁴³ Department of Justice, OIG Review, 2004, p. 5.

⁴⁴ N.H.Ammar, et al. "Muslims in Prison: A Case Study from Ohio State Prisons," *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, Vol. 48, No. 4, (2004), pp. 416-417.

⁴⁵ Fahrad Khosrokhavar and Danielle Joly. *Muslims in Prison: Challenge and Change in Britain and France*. Palgrave, Oct 2005.

prisoners. This shortage provides ample opportunities for radical Islamist preachers and organizers to spread their message among prisoners.

The number of Muslim inmates in Europe since the 1970s has been growing. France and Britain have the largest and longest established populations of Muslims in Western Europe. Muslim prisoners serving prison sentences in England and Wales have increased as a proportion of the prison population from 4.49 percent in 1991 to approximately 8.05 percent today. In France, the proportion of Muslims in prisons is probably higher than in the prisons of England and Wales. Estimates of their presence in sections of urban prisons in France go as high as 80 per cent.⁴⁶ Whereas the 6 million Muslims in the U.S. are mostly middle class, most of Western Europe's 12-15 million Muslims occupy a lower socioeconomic status. European policies on assimilation, in contrast to U.S. policies, have resulted in a division between Europe's Muslim population and the rest of society. This socioeconomic marginalization of Europe's Muslims makes them more vulnerable to radical political and religious messages.

Although immigrant communities and their levels of integration vary across nations, the experience of other countries is relevant for the U.S. For example, when radicalized inmates are released in Europe, they may travel to the U.S. or participate in networks with individuals inside the U.S. Both Zacarias Moussaoui and Richard Reid entered the country using passports issued by countries participating in the Visa Waiver Program. Moreover, because of the increasing amount of knowledge that can be shared globally through the Internet, successful radicalization and recruitment techniques can be adapted to the U.S. prison system with relative ease. Indirect access to the Internet allows prisoners in the U.S. to communicate with extremist and terrorist groups outside prison walls, making it easier for terrorist networks to work across borders.

Radicalization in Europe is not limited to recent immigrants from traditionally Islamic countries. Researchers in the Netherlands have found that radicalization occurs among many second and third generation immigrants, as well as a small number of converts of Dutch descent. These individuals tend to participate in local networks, but these local groups may periodically coordinate with one another or make connections with transnational networks.⁴⁷

Prison officials have struggled to control radicalization. However, in the interest of maintaining order, prison administrations often facilitate radical groups. Moreover, the blackmailing of prison staff and even non-Muslim religious personnel has resulted in radical inmate groups gaining access to cellular phones and even the Internet. Attorneys provided by foreign terrorist organizations have also arranged for inmates to be moved in and out of particular prisons. Attorneys have also been used to pass information between radical inmate leaders and to coordinate with outside networks. As in the U.S., radical religious groups have adopted the techniques of violent prison gangs to intimidate others and gain control over the facilities in which they are incarcerated.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ James A. Beckford, et al., *Muslims in Prison Challenge and Change in Britain and France*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Mar. 2, 2006, pp. 72 and 276.

⁴⁷ Violent Jihad in the Netherlands: Current trends in the Islamist terrorist threat, General Intelligence and Security Service Communications Department, March 2006, pp. 23-24.

⁴⁸ See Appendix A.

Current Response Efforts

Awareness and containment of the European problem is only part of the needed response. Because successful networks adopt and adapt effective strategies learned elsewhere, the European experience must be used as an opportunity to learn about prison radicalization so that it can be disrupted in the U.S. at a much earlier stage.

FEDERAL, STATE AND LOCAL RESPONSES

Officials at the state level have taken a number of steps to combat prisoner radicalization. Arizona, California and New York have started actively addressing this challenge. California in particular has been exemplary in this regard, having identified prisoner radicalization as a high priority threat and devoted resources to combating it. Despite severe manpower shortages, officials are making a concerted effort to investigate radical networks within their prisons. All California state prisons, for example, have an investigative unit dedicated to this task.

California officials are making a deliberate effort to identify key gaps in responses and fill them. Model terrorism and training awareness courses are being developed for correctional officers, and pilot programs have been introduced to draw on the expertise developed over time by institutional gang investigators. Prison officials have been working to counter gang organization and recruitment among inmates with success. Due to the similarities between gang recruitment and recruitment by radical groups within prisons, there are lessons that can and should be drawn from anti-gang efforts to thwart radicalization and potential terrorist recruiting. Important differences exist between gangs and radical groups, however, so these lessons should not be applied wholesale. Rather, anti-gang efforts should be studied to determine what among them can be usefully applied to combating radical groups in prisons.

The California state government has taken steps to coordinate efforts between its own prison facilities and between other agencies working on this problem. Presently, the California Department of Corrections has liaison officers posted at each prison who meet monthly to share information across facilities. Beyond the prison-to-prison network at the local level, the long term and crucial process of building relationships and trust between and among officials at different levels of government has been furthered by the establishment of a number of “fusion centers” to bring together federal, state and local officials to share intelligence and plan responses. The California state government has created several Joint Regional Intelligence Centers (JRICs) and Regional Threat Assessment Centers (RTACs), which are composed of representatives from prison staffs, the LASD, the Los Angeles Police Department, the FBI, the Drug Enforcement Agency and the Assistant U.S. Attorney for the area. Unfortunately, efforts are often stymied by the nature of bureaucracy. The FBI established four Joint Terrorism Task Forces (JTTFs) in California to bring together federal, state, and local officials, but the JTTFs meet infrequently. Likewise, the JRICs and RTACs are designed to study the problem strategically, not to support operations against radical groups, leading some member agencies to disregard the groups thus sinking an opportunity for intelligence sharing.

Even though state and county officials have been forward leaning in their efforts to work together, significant cultural, policy and resource impediments continue to hamstring their efforts. Crucially, local information must fully find its way into regional and national intelligence processes and networks, and strategic analysis must be fused with investigatory efforts for synergies to emerge. California provides an excellent case study of the complexities of working across jurisdictions, and among a number of agencies to get an accurate gauge of the extent of radicalization, but even the most effective example still suffers from numerous impediments to success.

In New York State, in late 2004 and early 2005, the New York State Office of Homeland Security, State Department of Corrections, New York City Department of Corrections, NYPD and the FBI began the process of establishing a joint prison monitoring system to monitor and track prison radicalization within State prisons and Riker's Island Jail. All of the agencies had been working on their own prison monitoring programs before that time, but each independent of the other. The system is built off of already well established gang intelligence units at both the State and city level and uses the Upstate New York Regional Intelligence Center (UNYRIC) and the NYPD intelligence center at the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) to fuse intelligence collected within the prisons and jails. More recently, the State of New York has begun the process of integrating county jails, most of which are run by local sheriffs, into the system. However, at this time, the majority of county jails are still not part of the prison monitoring system.⁴⁹

EXCLUDING RADICALS AND EXTREMIST MATERIALS FROM PRISONS

Since 2002, the FBI and FBOP have enhanced collaborative efforts to detect and respond to any threats to national security originating from prisons. Their experience indicates that U.S. prisons have been targeted for radicalization and recruitment.⁵⁰ However, because the vast majority of inmates are incarcerated in state prison systems, individual and organized radicalization and recruitment at the state level represents the majority of the current radical activity.

In response to the OIG report on the paucity of Muslim religious services providers, the FBOP has made changes to many of its policies.⁵¹ Religious services providers are now questioned about their beliefs regarding violence and other concepts related to radicalization. They are also subjected to more rigorous background checks. Muslim chaplains are involved in the screening process as subject matter experts.

The OIG report detailed issues related to the selection of chaplains and other religious services providers, such as the inadequate examination of doctrinal beliefs.⁵² Volunteers and

⁴⁹ See Appendix A.

⁵⁰ See Appendix A.

⁵¹ Analysis of the Response by the Federal Bureau of Prisons to Recommendations in the OIG's April 2004 Report on the Selection of Muslim Religious Service Providers, U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General, July 2004.

⁵² Department of Justice, OIG Review, April 2004.

religious contractors were required to receive endorsements only from local organizations. Since 1995, chaplains had been required to obtain endorsement from a national organization. The FBOP made the change in order to increase accountability and allow the chaplains to maintain contact with the endorsing agency when they were moved to other states. To further accountability, the FBOP could maintain more consistent relationships with a national agency, and more easily detect any deviation from mainstream religious practices. The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) was the only provider of endorsements of Muslim chaplains until 2003. In response to allegations about ISNA connections to terrorist groups, the FBOP stopped accepting endorsements for Muslim chaplains.⁵³ As a result, no new Islamic chaplains could be hired until the FBI cleared the ISNA of any association with terrorist groups. The FBOP has maintained ongoing communication with Muslim groups, including the ISNA.

There is strengthened communication between the FBI and FBOP regarding the vetting process of religious services providers. They are questioned and investigated regarding any connection to or funding from foreign governments. The FBOP has begun accepting endorsements of chaplain candidates from local organizations in lieu of national endorsements. FBOP chaplains must now meet new requirements for academic training, and experience, and pass thorough background checks. Chaplains must also demonstrate a willingness and ability to provide and coordinate religious programs for inmates of all faiths.⁵⁴ FBOP staff members have received training on Islamic beliefs and FBI field offices are required to provide training to local and state prisons.

The FBOP's mission is to identify organizations and individuals attempting to radicalize inmates and prevent their entry into prisons. Although the need for positive influences on inmates, including non-radical religious services is recognized, it is difficult to maintain the balance between the need to provide religious services and the need to prevent entry of radical religious services providers. While the OIG found that the FBOP was effectively employing ten current Muslim chaplains to screen new contractors, this was not felt to be adequate for supervision of existing inmate and non-inmate providers, because "ample opportunity exists...to deliver inappropriate and extremist messages." The ten FBOP Muslim chaplains cannot interview the many thousands of religious contractors who have exposure to inmates.

The FBOP maintains a database of inmates which is available to, but not widely used by, local and state systems. State and local databases of information on prisoners that do exist are not universally compatible with the federal system or with other states. Despite use of available databases and improvements in information sharing, intelligence gaps remain. Information about who is directing and funding radicalization and recruitment efforts is incomplete. The decentralized and fluctuating leadership of radical groups contributes to this deficit.⁵⁵

⁵³ The investigation of the ISNA is beyond the scope of the task force and the statements made in this report are not meant to confirm or deny the allegations mentioned above. The ISNA is mentioned specifically because it is the only national Islamic organizations that has been used to endorse FBOP chaplains.

⁵⁴ Department of Justice Fact Sheet, *Department of Justice Anti-Terrorism Efforts Since Sept. 11, 2001*, 5 September 2006 <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2006/September/06_opa_590.html>.

⁵⁵ See Appendix A.

The FBOP has developed a more complete system of monitoring the inventory of religious reading material and other forms of media available to Federal prisons. This allows for more consistent review by experienced chaplains. A set of best practice guidelines has been implemented throughout the FBOP regarding appropriate reading materials. These guidelines are incorporated into the training available to local and state facilities, though there has been no authoritative measure of the degree to which these practices are being implemented. The FBOP has mandated the constant supervision of inmate-led groups, and is requiring that the provision of Islamic teachings and study-guides must be prepared by Islamic chaplains who are full-time FBOP staff.⁵⁶

Findings

- Prison gangs and terrorist organizations share a common interest in criminal enterprises. The potential therefore exists for a nexus between the two. The limited numbers of individuals required by successful terrorist recruiting methods increases the possibility of cross fertilization. Research on foreign terrorists describes isolated and alienated young people lacking a sense of self importance that feeds a need to belong to a group—a set of conditions found in recruits of U.S.-based prison gangs. Radicalized prisoners form a pool of potential recruits for terrorist groups.
- Radicalization is neither unique to Islam nor a recent phenomenon, and remains the exception among prisoners rather than the rule. Right-wing extremist groups are present in prisons and have an extensive history of terrorist attacks.
- The inadequate number of Muslim religious services providers increases the risk of radicalization. At the same time, not all contracted religious leaders have the appropriate experience, education or background to lead fellow Muslims. Prisoners with little training in Islam have been able to assert themselves as leaders among the prison population, at times misrepresenting the faith. “Jailhouse Islam”, based upon cut-and-paste versions of the Qur’an, incorporates violent prison culture into religious practice. Radical religious service providers in prisons are able to move from prison to prison while remaining under the radar of prison officials. Currently there are no national organizations authorized by the FBOP to endorse Muslim chaplain candidates. By relying on local endorsing organizations, it is inherently more difficult to ensure that religious leaders providing services within prison systems are adequately trained and to deny radical ideologues access to prisoners. In the absence of a sound process to vet materials entering into prisons, the system remains vulnerable.
- The inability to track inmates upon release from prison, coupled with limited social support, gives rise to a vulnerable moment in which former inmates may act upon radical tendencies. The lack of support groups to help reintegrate released prisoners into society allows for individuals to carry into the larger community the radical

⁵⁶ *Department of Justice Anti-Terrorism Efforts Since Sept. 11, 2001*. Department of Justice Fact Sheet, 5 September 2006 <http://www.usdoj.gov/opa/pr/2006/September/06_opa_590.html>.

messages learned while confined and increases the likelihood of repeat offenses. There do exist local charities that may accept recently released prisoners of Muslim faith to help these individuals to become productive members of society by providing immediate assistance with housing and career counseling. However, these groups generally rely on private donations, and with their decentralized leadership may be vulnerable to the influences of radical groups more interested in finding recruits than in providing social services or in the welfare of prisoners.

- Resource limitations – both in terms of manpower and financing – hinder efforts to combat prisoner radicalization. Officials in California report that every investigation into radical groups in their prisons uncovers new leads, but that they simply do not have enough investigators to follow every case of radicalization and information goes unshared with officials at other prisons or agencies.
- Lack of systematic intelligence and information sharing among federal, state and local prisons on inmates who express violent, religion-based behaviors allows for such prisoners to carry out a message of extremism undetected. Information collection and sharing among federal, state and local prison systems is integral to tracking radical behavior of prisoners and religious services providers, and to preventing recruiters from moving freely between prisons. Significant strides have been made at the federal level, but change at the state and local level is difficult to assess. Further, intelligence regarding radicalization activities at the federal, state and local levels must be integrated into the body of information shared through the ISE.
- Radicalization in prisons is a global problem and bears upon the national security of the U.S. Information sharing between and among the U.S. and other countries is crucial. Lessons learned abroad afford the U.S. the opportunity to proactively address such threats domestically.
- At present there is insufficient information about prisoner radicalization to qualify the threat. There is a significant lack of social science research on this issue. No records currently exist, for example, on the religious affiliations of inmates when they enter prison. This can be improved by policies that promote good research while continuing to secure the rights of inmates who are involved in these studies. The motivations for and incentives offered by terrorist groups must be better understood, and the sequence of radicalization must be better understood to identify the steps that separate a radicalized inmate from a terrorist recruit – that is, the factor or factors that exist in prison that cause a few radicalized prisoners to pursue violence.
- Prison officials are understandably stretched thin by the need to maintain order in overcrowded and under-funded facilities. Nevertheless, because information is an essential precursor to action, investigation of radicalization in prisons must become a priority.

Recommendations

Prisoner radicalization is a potentially significant threat to U.S. national security. Conditions in prison are conducive to radicalization, as demonstrated by Europe's experience and cases within the U.S. Radicalized prisoners are a potential pool of recruits by terrorist groups. The U.S., with its large prison population, is at risk of facing the sort of homegrown terrorism currently plaguing other countries. To deal with this threat before it materializes as a terrorist attack, Congress should establish a commission to investigate prison radicalization. An objective risk assessment is urgently needed to investigate this issue in depth, in order to better understand the nature of the threat, and to calibrate and formulate our prevention and response efforts accordingly.⁵⁷

Religious radicalization within prisons is a complex problem and therefore no one profession alone is equipped to analyze and recommend change. A multi-disciplinary approach that includes perspectives of religion, criminal justice, law, and behavioral sciences is vital for proactive analysis of the phenomenon. We would urge that the Commission seek to balance the practice of religious freedom while preventing the spread of radical ideology in a religious context.

Among the areas to be addressed by the commission are the following recommended priority issues:

- Objectively assess the risk posed by the influence of radical groups in the prison system, as well as the current levels of information sharing between and among agencies at all levels of government involved in managing inmates and monitoring radical groups.
- Identify steps to ensure the legitimacy of Islamic endorsing agencies so as to ensure a reliable and effective process of providing religious services to Muslim inmates.
- Identify steps to effectively reintegrate former inmates into the larger society, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will be recruited by radical groups posing as social service providers, or will act upon radical tendencies learned behind bars.
- Identify broader areas of dialogue with the Muslim community to better facilitate cultural understanding.
- Identify lessons that can be learned and adapted from present and past efforts to combat gangs and right-wing extremists in prisons. Existing prison programs designed to prevent radicalization and recruitment or to disrupt radical groups, whether at the local, state, federal, or international level, should be evaluated to determine a set of "best practices" that can be used to develop a comprehensive strategy to counter radicalization.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security are also conducting their own strategic assessments regarding the scope of radicalization and recruitment in U.S. prisons from a law enforcement-centric point of view.

- Knowledge must be translated into action. Awareness, education and training programs must be developed for personnel who work in prison, probation and parole settings.

Appendix A

Prisoner Radicalization Task Force Briefings*

- Johari Abdul-Malik: Muslim Chaplain, Howard University, Washington, D.C.
- Randy Beardsworth: Assistant Secretary for Strategic Planning , Department of Homeland Security
- Matthew Bettenhausen: Director, Office of Homeland Security, California
- Alon Daniel: Counterterrorism Consultant, Transnational Crime and Corruption Center, American University
- Richard Davis: Senior Associate, Center for the Study of the Presidency; Former Director of Prevention Policy, Homeland Security Advisory Council
- Cindy Gatiglio: Intelligence Analyst, Emergency Operations Bureau, Terrorism Early Warning Group, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
- Matthew Hamidullah: Warden, Federal Bureau of Prisons in Estill, South Carolina
- William Hipsley: Deputy Director, California Office of Homeland Security
- Sunni-Ali Islam: Muslim Religious Service Provider, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections
- James McMahon: Director, New York State Office of Homeland Security
- Larry Meade: Sergeant, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
- Todd Puhler: Federal Bureau of Investigations
- Larry Richards: Detective, Emergency Operations Bureau, Terrorism Early Warning Group, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
- Rick Rimmer: Assistant Secretary, California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation
- John Stedman: Lieutenant, Los Angeles Sheriff's Department
- Craig Trout: Federal Bureau of Prisons Detailee, Federal Bureau of Investigations

* The task force consulted, interviewed and received briefings from additional subject matter experts who wish to remain anonymous. All briefings were conducted under "Chatham House" rules.

Appendix B

Additional Resources

I. BOOKS

1. *A Correctional Institution's Guide to Islamic Religious Practices*, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), (2004).
2. Felecia Dix-Richardson & Billy R. Close eds., *Religion, the Community, and the Rehabilitation of Criminal Offenders*, (The Haworth Press, 2003) pp 87 – 107.
3. Ihsan Bagby et. al, *The American Mosque: A National Portrait*, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), (2001).
4. James A. Beckford, et al., *Muslims in Prison Challenge and Change in Britain and France*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, Mar. 2, 2006) pp 1 – 305.
5. *Law Enforcement Official's Guide to the Muslim Community*, Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), (2003).
6. Saeed Ismaeel, *The Difference Between the Shi'ite and the Majority of Muslim Scholars* (3rd ed., Falls Church, VA: Unites States Office, World Assembly of Muslim Youth, 1995)

II. REPORTS

1. *A Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons Selection of Muslim Religious Services Providers, U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General*, (Apr. 2004), available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/special/0404/final.pdf>
2. *Christopher M. Blanchard, The Islamic Traditions of Wabbahism and Salafiyya*, CRS Report for Congress, Order Code RS21695, (Jan. 25, 2006), available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS21695.pdf#search=%22%22The%20Islamic%20Traditions%20of%20Wahhabism%20and%20Salafiyya%22%22>
3. *Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons Summary of Findings and Recommendations*, (June 2006), available at http://www.prisoncommission.org/pdfs/prison_commission_summary.pdf#search=%22%22The%20daily%20count%20of%20prisoners%20in%20the%20United%20States%20has%20surpassed%202.2%20million.%20Over%20the%20course%20of%20a%22%22
4. *Inmate Religious Beliefs and Practices (Technical Reference)*, U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Prisons, (Mar. 27, 2002), available at <http://www.nicic.org/pubs/2002/017613.pdf>.

5. *John J. Gibbons and Nicholas de B. Katzenbach, Confronting Confinement: A Report of the commission on safety and abuse in America's prisons, Commission on Safety and Abuse in America's Prisons*, (June 2006), available at http://www.prisoncommission.org/pdfs/Confronting_Confinement.pdf.
6. Kristin Archick, et. al., *Islamist Extremism in Europe*, CRS Report for Congress, Order Code RS22211, (Jan. 6, 2006), available at <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/terror/RS22211.pdf#search=%22%22Islamist%20Extremism%20in%20Europe%22%22>
7. *Program Statement*, U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Prisons, (Dec. 31, 2004), available at http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/trapp/BOP_5360_008.pdf#search=%22%22Religious%20resources%20will%20be%20equitably%20distributed%20for%20the%22%22.
8. *The Federal Bureau of Prisons: Semiannual Report to Congress*, Office of the Inspector General, (Apr. 1, 2004 – Sept. 30, 2004), available at <http://www.usdoj.gov/oig/semiannual/0411/bop.htm>.

III. CONGRESSIONAL MATERIALS

1. *Hearing before Senate Committee on Intelligence of the United States Senate*, (Feb. 16, 2005), (Testimony of Robert S. Mueller, III, Director Federal Bureau of Investigation, available at <http://www.fbi.gov/congress/congress05/mueller021605.htm>).
2. *Hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Subcommittee on Technology, Terrorism and Homeland Security, "Terrorist Recruitment and Infiltration in the United States: Prisons and Military as an Operational Base"*, (Oct.14, 2003), (Testimony of Dr. Michael Waller, Annenberg Professor of International Communication the Institute of World Politics), available at <http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/1039743/posts>
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