Law Enforcement-Focused Best Practices to Prevent Violent Extremism

OVERVIEW

These findings come from the Report on the National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism. In August 2014, the Department of Justice's (DOJ) Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) and the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Federal Law Enforcement Training Centers (FLETC) partnered with START to coordinate a National Summit on Empowering Communities to Prevent Violent Extremism. The recommendations included in the full report reflect the major themes that emerged, focusing on those that the participants appeared to support through debate and dialogue across the two-day event.

FINDINGS

Law Enforcement organizations engaged in CVE work experienced three paradigm shifts over time. First came the recognition that CVE approaches are pragmatic and proactive, as they build trust and enhance communication, empowering communities to identify and assist at risk individuals and discredit violent ideologies in ways that the law enforcement community is not well-positioned to do. Second came the recognition that while the law enforcement community has an important role to play, it should ultimately play a supporting role to communities and other governmental organizations that are better positioned to operate in the pre-criminal space. A third paradigm shift was that CVE requires partnerships involving individuals, families, communities, institutions and various government agencies working to build resilience to all hazards, including but not limited to violent extremism.

All of the delegations highlighted the importance of objective training on CVE-related issues for law enforcement. In contrast, they discussed the "cottage industry" of training providers that offer counterproductive and biased curricula, especially regarding specific religious and ethnic groups.

Five major recommendations from summit participants regarding law-enforcement practices are listed below:

1. Law enforcement organizations should prioritize building and strengthening mutual trust between themselves and the communities they serve.
2. To engage with communities, law enforcement organizations should be engaged with and responsive to community organizations and advocates consistently and over time.
3. Communication with a wide range of community partners on a broad range of topics should be part of the routine operations of law enforcement.
4. Law enforcement organizations should focus prevention and intervention activities on behaviors, and not on racial, religious or ethnic identity.
5. Law enforcement organizations should collaboratively develop and evaluate multilevel prevention and intervention programs.

> "After the bombings we were inundated with support from the communities. That was a testament to our relationship with our community members. To plan the next marathon, we knew it was going to be highly restrictive. Getting information out to everyone affected by the new plan and heightened security, using social media and the traditional media – everyone was incredibly cooperative and understanding."
>
> *Boston Delegation*

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For a copy of the full report on this topic, please see the COPS website at http://ric-zai-inc.com/Publications/cops-p326-pub.pdf.