



STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION  
PLAN FOR EMPOWERING  
LOCAL PARTNERS TO PREVENT  
VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN  
THE UNITED STATES

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# Strategic Implementation Plan for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States

As a government, we are working to prevent all types of extremism that leads to violence, regardless of who inspires it. At the same time, countering al-Qa'ida's violent ideology is one part of our comprehensive strategy to defeat al-Qa'ida. Over the past 2½ years, more key al-Qa'ida leaders—including Usama bin Laden—have been eliminated in rapid succession than at any time since the September 11 attacks. We have strengthened homeland security and improved information sharing. Thanks to coordinated intelligence and law enforcement, numerous terrorist plots have been thwarted, saving many American lives.

-----President Barack Obama, August 2011

Law enforcement and government officials for decades have understood the critical importance of building relationships, based on trust, with the communities they serve. Partnerships are vital to address a range of challenges and must have as their foundation a genuine commitment on the part of law enforcement and government to address community needs and concerns, including protecting rights and public safety. In our efforts to counter violent extremism, we will rely on existing partnerships that communities have forged with Federal, State, and local government agencies. This reliance, however, must not change the nature or purpose of existing relationships. In many instances, our partnerships and related activities were not created for national security purposes but nonetheless have an indirect impact on countering violent extremism (CVE).

At the same time, this Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) also includes activities, some of them relatively new, that are designed specifically to counter violent extremism. Where this is the case, we have made it clear. It is important that both types of activities be supported and coordinated appropriately at the local level.

## Background

The President in August 2011 signed the *National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* (National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners), which outlines our community-based approach and the Federal Government's role in empowering local stakeholders to build resilience against violent extremism.<sup>1</sup> It recognizes that, as the National Security Strategy from May 2010 highlights, "our best defenses against this threat are well informed and equipped families, local communities, and institutions." To support our overarching goal of preventing violent extremists and their supporters from inspiring, radicalizing, financing, or recruiting individuals or groups in the

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1. The National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners defines violent extremists as "individuals who support or commit ideologically motivated violence to further political goals."

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United States to commit acts of violence, the Federal Government is focused on three core areas of activity: (1) enhancing engagement with and support to local communities that may be targeted by violent extremists; (2) building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism; and (3) countering violent extremist propaganda while promoting our ideals.

The SIP details how we are implementing the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners. It explains our core objectives and sub-objectives; describes how activities by departments and agencies are aligned with these; lists planned activities that address gaps and expand efforts; and assigns Federal Government leads and partners for various actions. The SIP provides a blueprint for how we will build community resilience against violent extremism.<sup>2</sup> It does not address our overseas CVE efforts, other than ensuring we coordinate domestic and international activities.

Although the SIP will be applied to prevent all forms of violent extremism, we will prioritize preventing violent extremism and terrorism that is inspired by al-Qa'ida and its affiliates and adherents, which the 2010 National Security Strategy, the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism, and the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners identify as the preeminent security threats to our country. This is, however, a matter of emphasis and prioritization, and does not entail ignoring other forms of violent extremism. As the July 2011 terrorist attack in Norway underscored, free societies face threats from a range of violent extremists.

As the activities described in the SIP are executed, there will be major and long-lasting impacts:

- There will be platforms throughout the country for including communities that may be targeted by violent extremists for recruitment and radicalization into ongoing Federal, State, and local engagement efforts;
- The Federal Government will support that engagement through a task force of senior officials from across the government;
- Community-led efforts to build resilience to violent extremism will be supported;
- Analysis will increase in depth and relevance, and will be shared with those assessed to need it, including Governor-appointed Homeland Security Advisors, Major Cities Chiefs, Mayors' Offices, and local partners;
- Training for Federal, State, tribal, and local government and law enforcement officials on community resilience, CVE, and cultural competence will improve, and that training will meet rigorous professional standards; and
- Local partners, including government officials and community leaders, will better understand the threat of violent extremism and how they can work together to prevent it.

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2. The concept of "resilience" has applied to a range of areas such as emergency preparedness and critical infrastructure protection (e.g., the ability of financial markets, power suppliers, and telecommunications companies to withstand an attack or disaster and resume operations rapidly.) The National Security Strategy emphasized the importance of including individuals and communities in our approach to enhancing resilience. Both the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners and the 2011 National Strategy for Counterterrorism expanded this concept to CVE, the latter explicitly stating, "We are working to bring to bear many of these capabilities to build resilience within our communities here at home against al-Qa'ida inspired radicalization, recruitment, and mobilization to violence."

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The SIP outlines ongoing, as well as planned, activities to counter violent extremism, which will be accomplished through existing funding and by prioritizing within the resources available to relevant departments and agencies. Some of these activities are specific to CVE, while others address broader non-security policy objectives but may have an indirect effect on countering radicalization to violence. Because our efforts are threaded across a range of different missions, such as training, outreach, and international exchanges, the execution of the SIP will be impacted by funding for both security and non-security related activities.

### **Process for Developing the SIP**

The Obama Administration continues to prioritize and stress the critical importance of CVE in the Homeland. Given the complexities of addressing this threat and the uniqueness of the operating environment in the United States, the Administration recognizes the potential to do more harm than good if our Nation's approach and actions are not dutifully considered and deliberated. Throughout this process, careful consideration was given to the rule of law and constitutional principles, particularly those that address civil rights and civil liberties. With those principles in mind, we noted that departments and agencies with domestically focused mandates have an array of tools and capabilities that can be leveraged to prevent violent extremism, though some have limited experience in the national security arena. This necessitated a deliberative and carefully calibrated approach with an extensive evaluative period to fully address their potential roles and participation, which for some entailed thinking outside their traditional mandates and areas of work.

After assessing how individuals are radicalized and recruited to violence in the United States, the Administration established an accelerated process, led by the National Security Staff (NSS), to develop the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners and the SIP. An Interagency Policy Committee (IPC) on countering and preventing violent extremism in the United States was established—with Assistant and Deputy Assistant Secretary-level representatives from across government—to consider roles and responsibilities, potential activities, guiding principles, and how best to coordinate and synchronize our efforts. The IPC, with support from specialist sub-IPCs, drafted our first national strategy on preventing violent extremism in the United States, which was approved by Deputies from the various departments and agencies and signed by the President.

- The following departments and agencies were involved in the deliberations and approval process: the Departments of State (State), the Treasury, Defense (DOD), Justice (DOJ), Commerce, Labor, Health and Human Services (HHS), Education (EDU), Veterans Affairs, and Homeland Security (DHS), as well as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC).

To develop the SIP, the NSS tasked NCTC with coordinating the first comprehensive baseline of activities across the United States Government related to countering and preventing violent extremism in the United States, which constitutes the ongoing activities outlined in the SIP. This included CVE-specific initiatives, as well as activities that were not developed for CVE purposes, but nonetheless may indirectly contribute to the overall goals of the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners. These activities were aligned with objectives and sub-objectives—based on the strategy and approved by the IPC—to

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assess our overall effort and identify gaps. The IPC then considered ongoing and potential actions to address these gaps, which form the basis of planned activities outlined in the SIP. The SIP was approved by Deputies from the various departments and agencies in November 2011.

### **Compliance with the Rule of Law**

A fundamental precept of the SIP is that the Federal Government's actions must be consistent with the Constitution and in compliance with U.S. laws and regulations. Departments and agencies are responsible for identifying and complying with legal restrictions governing their activities and respective authorities. Compliance with the rule of law, particularly ensuring protection of First Amendment rights, is central to our National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners and the execution of the SIP.

### **Crosscutting and Supportive Activities**

There are fundamental activities that are critical to our success and cut across the objectives of the SIP. These include: (1) whole-of-government coordination; (2) leveraging existing public safety, violence prevention, and community resilience programming; (3) coordination of domestic and international CVE efforts, consistent with legal limits; and (4) addressing technology and virtual space. In many instances, these crosscutting and supportive activities describe the ongoing activities of departments and agencies in fulfilling their broader missions. As they implement new initiatives and programs in support of the SIP, departments and agencies will ensure these enabling activities appropriately guide their efforts.

#### **1. Whole-of-Government Coordination**

Leveraging the wide range of tools, capabilities, and resources of the United States Government in a coordinated manner is essential for success. Traditional national security or law enforcement agencies such as DHS, DOJ, and the FBI will execute many of the programs and activities outlined in the SIP. However, as the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners states, we must also use a broader set of good governance programs, "including those that promote immigrant integration and civic engagement, protect civil rights, and provide social services, which may also help prevent radicalization that leads to violence." To this end, agencies such as EDU and HHS, which have substantial expertise in engaging communities and delivering services, also play a role.

This does not mean the missions and priorities of these partners will change or that their efforts will become narrowly focused on national security. Their inclusion stems from our recognition that radicalization to violence depends on a variety of factors, which in some instances may be most effectively addressed by departments and agencies that historically have not been responsible for national security or law enforcement. These non-security partners, including specific components within DOJ and DHS, have an array of tools that can contribute to this effort by providing indirect but meaningful impact on CVE, including after school programs, networks of community-based organizations that provide assistance to new immigrants, and violence prevention programs. We will coordinate activities, where appropriate, to support the CVE effort while ensuring we do not change the core missions and functions of these departments and agencies.

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### **2. Leveraging Existing Public Safety, Violence Prevention, and Resilience Programming**

While preventing violent extremism is an issue of national importance, it is one of many safety and security challenges facing our Nation. As we enter an era of increased fiscal constraints, we must ensure our approach is tailored to take advantage of current programs and leverages existing resources. Our efforts therefore will be supported, where appropriate, by emphasizing opportunities to address CVE within available resources related to public safety, violence prevention, and building resilience.

### **3. Coordination of Domestic and International Efforts**

While always ensuring compliance with applicable laws and regulations, we must ensure a high level of coordination between our domestic and international efforts to address violent extremism. Although both the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners and the SIP specifically address preventing violent extremism in the United States, the delineation between domestic and international is becoming increasingly less rigid. Violent extremists operating abroad have direct access to Americans via the Internet, and overseas events have fueled violent extremist radicalization and recruitment in the United States. The converse is also true: events occurring in the United States have empowered the propaganda of violent extremists operating overseas. While making certain that they stay within their respective authorities, departments and agencies must ensure coordination between our domestic and international CVE efforts. Given its mandate to support both domestic and international planning, NCTC will help facilitate this part of the CVE effort so that our Homeland and overseas activities are appropriately synchronized, consistent with all applicable laws and regulations. While individual departments and agencies will regularly engage foreign partners, all international engagement will continue to be coordinated through State.

### **4. Addressing Technology and Virtual Space**

The Internet, social networking, and other technology tools and innovations present both challenges and opportunities. The Internet has facilitated violent extremist recruitment and radicalization and, in some instances, attack planning, requiring that we consider programs and initiatives that are mindful of the online nature of the threat. At the same time, the Federal Government can leverage and support the use of new technologies to engage communities, build and mobilize networks against violent extremism, and undercut terrorist narratives. All of our activities should consider how technology impacts radicalization to violence and the ways we can use it to expand and improve our whole-of-government effort. As noted in sub-objective 3.3, we will develop a separate strategy focused on CVE online.

## **Roles and Responsibilities**

The SIP assigns Leads and Partners in each of the Future Activities and Efforts listed under respective sub-objectives. Leads and Partners have primary responsibility for coordinating, integrating, and synchronizing activities to achieve SIP sub-objectives and the overall goal of the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners.

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Expectation of Leads and Partners are as follows:

**Lead:** A department or agency responsible for convening pertinent partners to identify, address, and report on steps that are being taken, or should be taken, to ensure activities are effectively executed. The Lead is accountable for, among other things:

- Fostering communication among Partners to ensure all parties understand how to complete the activity;
- Identifying, in collaboration with assigned Partners, the actions and resources needed to effectively execute the activity;
- Identifying issues that impede progress; and
- Informing all departments and agencies about the status of progress by the Lead and other sub-objective Partners, including impediments, modifications, or alterations to the plan for implementation.

**Partner:** A department or agency responsible for collaborating with a Lead and other Partners to accomplish an activity. Partner(s) are accountable for:

- Accomplishing actions under their department or agency's purview in a manner that contributes to the effective execution of an activity;
- Providing status reports and assessments of progress on actions pertinent to the activity; and
- Identifying resource needs that impede progress on their department or agency's activities.

### **Assessing Progress**

It is important to recognize that the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners represents the first time the United States Government has outlined an approach to address ideologically inspired violent extremism in the Homeland. While the objectives and sub-objectives listed in the SIP represent the collective wisdom and insight of the United States Government about what areas of action have the greatest potential to prevent violent extremism, we will learn more about our effectiveness as we assess our efforts over time, and we will adjust our activities accordingly.

Given the short history of our coordinated, whole-of-government approach to CVE, we will first develop key benchmarks to guide our initial assessment. Where possible, we will also work to develop indicators of impact to supplement these performance measures, which will tell us whether our activities are having the intended effects with respect to an objective or sub-objective. As we implement our activities, future evaluations will shift away from benchmark performance measures towards impact assessments. Departments and agencies will be responsible for assessing their specific activities in pursuit of SIP objectives, in coordination with an Assessment Working Group. We will develop a process for identifying gaps, areas of limited progress, resource needs, and any additional factors resulting from new information on the dynamics of radicalization to violence. Our progress will be evaluated and reported annually to the President.



## **Objectives, Sub-Objectives, and Activities**

The SIP's objectives mirror the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners' areas of priority action: (1) enhancing Federal engagement with and support to local communities that may be targeted by violent extremists; (2) building government and law enforcement expertise for preventing violent extremism; and (3) countering violent extremist propaganda while promoting our ideals. Each of these is supported by sub-objectives, which constitute measurable lines of effort with which our specific programs and initiatives are aligned. A key purpose of the SIP is to describe the range of actions we are taking to improve or expand these efforts.

### **1. Enhancing Federal Engagement with and Support to Local Communities that May be Targeted by Violent Extremists**

Communication and meaningful engagement with the American public is an essential part of the Federal Government's work, and it is critical for developing local partnerships to counter violent extremism. Just as we engage and raise awareness to prevent gang violence, sexual offenses, school shootings, and other acts of violence, so too must we ensure that our communities are empowered to recognize threats of violent extremism and understand the range of government and nongovernment resources that can help keep their families, friends, and neighbors safe. As noted in the National Strategy for Empowering Local Partners:

Engagement is essential for supporting community-based efforts to prevent violent extremism because it allows government and communities to share information, concerns, and potential solutions. Our aims in engaging with communities to discuss violent extremism are to: (1) share sound, meaningful, and timely information about the threat of violent extremism with a wide range of community groups and organizations, particularly those involved in public safety issues; (2) respond to community concerns about government policies and actions; and (3) better understand how we can effectively support community-based solutions.

At the same time, we must ensure that our efforts to prevent violent extremism do not narrow our relationships with communities to any single issue, including national security. This necessitates continuing to engage on the full range of community interests and concerns, but it also requires, where feasible, that we incorporate communities that are being targeted by violent extremists into broader forums with other communities when addressing non-CVE issues. While we will engage with some communities specifically on CVE issues because of particular needs, care should be taken to avoid giving the false impression that engagement on non-security issues is taking place exclusively because of CVE concerns. To ensure transparency, our engagement with communities that are being targeted by violent extremists will follow two tracks:

- We will specifically engage these communities on the threat of violent extremism to raise awareness, build partnerships, and promote empowerment. This requires specific conversations and activities related to security issues.
- Where we engage on other topics, we will work to include them in broader forums with other communities when appropriate.

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*1.1 Improve the depth, breadth, and frequency of Federal Government engagement with and among communities on the wide range of issues they care about, including concerns about civil rights, counterterrorism security measures, international events, and foreign policy issues.*

Violent extremist narratives espouse a rigid division between “us” and “them” that argues for exclusion from the broader society and a hostile relationship with government and other communities. Activities that reinforce our shared sense of belonging and productive interactions between government and the people undercut this narrative and emphasize through our actions that we are all part of the social fabric of America. As President Obama emphasized, when discussing Muslim Americans in the context of al-Qa’ida’s attempts to divide us, “we don’t differentiate between them and us. It’s just us.”

### *Current Activities and Efforts*

Departments and agencies have been conducting engagement activities based on their unique mandates. To better synchronize this work, U.S. Attorneys, who historically have engaged with communities in their districts, have begun leading Federal engagement efforts. This includes our efforts to engage with communities to (1) discuss issues such as civil rights, counterterrorism security measures, international events, foreign policy, and other community concerns; (2) raise awareness about the threat of violent extremism; and (3) facilitate partnerships to prevent radicalization to violence. The types of communities involved in engagement differ depending on the locations. United States Attorneys, in consultation with local and Federal partners, are best positioned to make local determinations about which communities they should engage. Appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, U.S. Attorneys are the senior law enforcement and executive branch officials in their districts, and are therefore well-placed to help shape and drive community engagement in the field.

In December 2010, 32 U.S. Attorneys’ Offices began expanding their engagement with communities to raise awareness about how the United States Government can protect all Americans from discrimination, hate crimes, and other threats; to listen to concerns; and to seek input about government policies and programs. In some instances, these efforts also included initiatives to educate the public about the threat of violent extremist recruitment, which is one of many components of a broader community outreach program.

- During this initial pilot, these U.S. Attorneys significantly expanded outreach and engagement on a range of issues of interest to communities; built new relationships where needed; and communicated the United States Government’s approach to CVE.
- Departments and agencies, including State, the Treasury, EDU, HHS, and DHS provided information, speakers, and other resources for U.S. Attorneys’ community engagement activities, frequently partnering with DOJ on specific programs and events.

A National Task Force, led by DOJ and DHS, was established in November 2010 to help coordinate community engagement at the national level. It includes all departments and agencies involved in relevant community engagement efforts and focuses on compiling local, national, and international best practices and disseminating these out to the field, especially to U.S. Attorneys’ Offices. The Task Force is also responsible for connecting field-based Federal components to the full range of United States Government officials involved in community engagement to maximize partnerships,

